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**Investigating major difficulties and analyzing common  
errors encountered by EFL learners in writing:  
The case of third year pupils at Ibn Khaldoune middle school, Tolga,  
Biskra.**

A dissertation submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages as partial fulfillment for the  
Master's Degree in Sciences of Languages

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## **Dedications**

I dedicate this research work to:

The man of my life, my eternal example, my moral support, and my source of joy and happiness, the one who has always sacrificed himself to see me succeed, may Allah keep him in his vast paradise, my beloved father.

The light of my days, the source of my efforts, and the flame of my heart, my life, and happiness my beloved mother.

My dear sisters and brothers.

My dear teacher: Hadj DRIHEM Mohamed Laarbi.

My dear sister Hadjer and her family.

My dear friends: Ijtihad, Amani, Fatiha, Fahima, Chahra, Asma, and Khadija

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## **Abstract**

Teaching writing for third year EFL pupils studying at Ibn Khaldoune Middle School is a challenging task for most teachers. The majority of pupils have difficulties in achieving a satisfactory level in writing. The present study aims at investigating the major difficulties faced by third year EFL middle school pupils at Ibn Khaldoune middle school in Tolga while composing. The study targets third year classes of academic year 2019/2020 including three (n=3) classes. Teacher's sample consists of two teachers. They have from four to more than ten years experience in teaching English language. Pupils' sample consists of ninety-five (n=95) pupils (male=46, female=49). The researcher utilized a mixed method encompassing three data collection tools: a questionnaire for teachers of English language, an interview with nine (n=9) third year EFL middle school pupils, and analysis of their written texts of the examination. The aim of using the teachers' questionnaire and the pupils' interview is to explore the major difficulties encountered by pupils in writing and their causes. The aim of using analysis of written text is to identify the nature of errors our sample of pupils make along the writing process. The analysis of teachers' questionnaire reveals that majority of their pupils face difficulties when they write. These difficulties are related to organizing and connecting ideas, inappropriate and incorrect word selection and use, incorrect application of grammar rules, and misspelled words. Inadequate and inaccurate writing are due to: (a) ineffective teaching approach of writing skill, (b) lack of practice inside the classroom, (c) insufficient time for practicing writing, lack of reading, (d) negativity towards composing, (e) mother language interference, and finally (f) teachers' negative and de-motivating feedback. The analysis of their written texts reveals that most of the pupils' errors have to do with English preposition, use of English articles, sentence structure, sentence fragments, verb tense, punctuation marks, use of capitalizations, word choice, word-order, and spelling.

## **List of abbreviations and acronyms**

**%:** Percentage

**CS:** Communication Strategy

**EFL:** English as Foreign Language

**Et al.:** et alia (and others).

**P:** page.

**Hyp:** Hypotheses

**L1:** First Language

**L2:** Second Language

**P<sub>1</sub>:** Pupil one

**P<sub>x</sub>:** Pupil x

**Q:** question.

**&:** and.

**SVO:** Subject Verb Object

**TL:** Target Language

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**GENERAL**

**INTRODUCTION**

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## **General introduction**

### **Introduction**

The writing is considered as an important productive skill in the teaching and learning processes. The writing skill has been one of the most powerful skills of communication because it allows learners to communicate their thoughts. Thus, it can be said that writing is a mean of communication between teachers and their learners, so the learners express their knowledge through the use of writing process which allows teachers to assess what the learners write.

We can see that there is integration between writing and reading. Thus, the process of writing is related to reading activities through discussing and reading some instructions inside the classroom to get more vocabularies. EFL learners face tremendous difficulties to write accurately written expressions seem, although the teachers apply different tasks including order sentences, fill in the gaps, using cues and write a paragraph; to improve the level of writing. Subsequently, teachers also provide feedback to their learners' writing.

In order to ameliorate EFL learners' writing skill, teachers are required to apply the most effective techniques such as asking questions, so that teachers have been resulted by English foreign language to help EFL learners in learning process. Teachers are recommended to use strategies that are most effective; among these strategies we propose the usage and practice of writing skill in classroom.

### **1. Statement of the problem**

In the past, teachers were the only source of information upon which EFL learners rely most. Learners in their studies learn English language; they supposed to study many skills which categorized into receptive and productive ones. The last one is the most difficult which EFL learners are asked to write a paragraph. In writing a paragraph, pupils follow a set of steps and processes such as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and proof

reading, to produce a well unified coherent and ordered paragraph for those learners are faced difficulties because it includes mechanism and strategies. So they face many difficulties when they write including grammatical errors, inappropriate selection of words and spelling errors because of many reasons. These reasons are: (a) EFL learners do not pay attention neither to the form nor to the meaning of the paragraph when writing and they fall in the problem of language interference; (b) EFL learners do not give an importance to the mechanisms of writing such as punctuation and capitalization; (c) when they write in the foreign language, they write long sentences full of spelling errors; and finally (d) some EFL learners sound unwilling to write.

In addition, because learners face various difficulties, they fail in writing a clear, correct and meaningful piece of writing. The evidence for this is that they make many errors. For this, EFL pupils should first know the basic stages of writing a paragraph; improve their vocabulary through reading, learn about the grammar rules, mechanism (punctuation and capitalization) and spelling words for accurate writing.

## **2. Research questions**

The current study attempts to answer the following questions:

- Q<sub>1</sub>.** What is the nature of writing difficulties third year EFL middle school pupils usually face?
- Q<sub>2</sub>.** What are the major causes of third year EFL pupils writing difficulties?
- Q<sub>3</sub>.** What is the nature of error in the third year EFL middle school pupils' writings?
- Q<sub>4</sub>.** What are the causes of error production in third year EFL middle school pupils' writings?

## **3. Research hypotheses**

Throughout this study, we attempt to confirm or disconfirm the following hypotheses:

**Hyp<sub>1</sub>.** If third year EFL middle school pupils have difficulties with writing, such as inability to write good topic sentence, generate ideas, to keep unity and coherence of the paragraph, and so on, that would distract them to write an accurate paragraph.

**Hyp<sub>2</sub>.** If third year EFL middle school pupils make errors in their paragraphs, such as incorrect application of grammatical rules, incorrect use of punctuation marks and capitalizations, spelling mistakes, and so on, that would hinder them to write a good paragraph.

#### **4. Research aims**

Throughout this study, we aimed at: (a) investigating if middle school EFL learners benefit from their instructions in written expression to improve their writing skill; (b) determining the nature of writing difficulties that pupils are faced to treat them; (d) diagnosing the common errors committed by third year EFL middle school pupils; (d) figuring out the major causes that affect the learners' written production; and finally (e) sending a message to all middle school teachers to be responsible for using some methods and techniques for learners to avoid such errors.

#### **5. Significance of the study**

The importance of this study, that focuses on the writing skill, and the difficulties that are faced by the pupils in their written expression in addition the identification and classification of committed common errors in written text. We attempt to prove that there is a strong relation between the writing skill and the strategies of teaching this skill. Additional, we believe that this study is doing because it attempts to offer teachers with insights about the attitudes of learner toward the writing skills which leads pupils to produce poor written expression and to increase the learner's motivation to write correctly through the awareness from the importance of writing.

## **6. Research methodology**

The present study aimed at investigating the major difficulties that face third year learner's middle school in writing and analysing the common errors committed by these pupils in their writing production. In order to verify our research hypotheses and answer our questions, we use the mixed method; it is the combination between both qualitative and quantitative methods. As Jonke and Pennink (2010) demonstrate that "qualitative research is often regarded as 'messing around', being 'vague', not scientific and not following a structured plan whereas quantitative research is often regarded as being purely scientific, justifiable, precise and based on facts often reflected in exact figures" (p.38) and apply a descriptive research methodology to collect and analyze data. According to Jonke and Pennink (2010), the use of the both quantitative and qualitative method will provide teachers good results, and they can achieve our aims.

### **6.1. Population sampling**

We need a population and sample of population in question in order to conduct our research. Population and sample determines a great deal of success or failure of a study based on the correct decision. Dornyei (2003, pp.70-71) states that

Broadly speaking, the *sample* is the group of people whom researchers actually examine and the *population* is the group of people whom the survey is about. For example, the population in a study might be EFL learners in Taiwanese secondary schools and the actual sample might involve three Taiwanese secondary classes. That is, the target population of a study consists of all the people to whom the survey's findings are to be applied or generalized.

The present study is concerned with the investigation of the major difficulties in writing skill and the analyses of the common errors that third middle school learners commit in their written text. The population will be representing by both ninety-five (95)

third year middle school learners (male=46, female=49), and two (02) teachers of English language at Ibn Khaldoune middle school in Tolga, Biskra.

### **6.1.1. Teachers' sample**

This study deals with two (N=02) female teachers teach at Ibn Khaldoune middle school in Biskra. They have from 3 to more than 10 years experience in teaching English language.

### **6.1.2. Learners' sample**

The current study deals with a sample of nine (09) learners who are randomly chosen from a population of ninety-five (95) third year middle school learners. Their ages range from 12 to 13 years old. They study at Ibn Khaldoune middle school in Tolga-Biskra..

## **6.2. Data collection tools**

Three tools will be selected and used to gather data: teachers' questionnaire, pupils' interview and written text analysis, to find answers to our research questions and to test the validity of our hypotheses.

### **6.2.1. Questionnaire**

Questionnaire is a quantitative research tool. According to Anderson (1990, p. 207) defines it that "Allow the gathering of reliable and valid data, relatively, in a short time"; so, it is a written tool that consists of a series of questions, we are going to use semi-structured questionnaire, and it has open-ended and close-ended questions to gather more data about the nature of difficulties. It will be administered EFL third year middle school teachers. We are going to divide into three major parts. Part one tackles writing skill; part two deals with difficulties of writing, and the last one intends to figurate the major causes of writing.

### **6.2.2. Interview**

Interview is a qualitative research tool. As Dyer (1995) defines "An interview is not an ordinary, everyday conversation" (p. 56). It is an operation of exchanging views between two persons on interest topic. It will be addressed to EFL third year middle school learners. We are going to choose semi-structured interview. It will be used to collect deeper insights and more information about our research work. It contains open-ended that help to answer our questions. We are going to divide into three major parts. Part one is about the writing skill; part two focuses difficulties of writing skill; whereas part three is concerned with the causes of writing.

### **6.2.3. Corpus analysis (analysis of written texts)**

The third data collection tool we use in our work is the analysis of written texts based on committed errors. The study relies on quantitative research design to achieve its objectives. The analysis will be conducted after the second English examination for diagnosing the types and frequency of common errors committed by (95) third year middle school learners (male=46, female=49) in their paragraphs of the academic year 2019/2020.

## **7. Limitations of the study**

When conducting any research, the researcher faces some obstacles that hinder the progress of the research process. In our study, we encountered some difficulties mainly concerning data collection. It has been scheduled to conduct an interview with the teachers and the questionnaire with the pupils, but Covid-19 prevents us to achieve this research action. In addition to the delay in obtaining the pupils' examination papers and taking copies of them, as that was on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Even though, the study has been affected by the limitations mentioned above, the students researcher has succeeded in gathering the intended information to answer the posed questions.

## **8. Structure of the dissertation**

The dissertation is a whole of three chapters: **Chapter one** is devoted to literature review about writing skill. It deals various definitions of writing, writing processes, writing importance, approaches to teaching writing, writing and meta-cognition, and criteria of good writing. Finally, it sheds light on the integrating of reading with writing and the attitudes of learners towards writing skill.

**The second chapter** deals with writing difficulties for EFL learners. It provides a deep discussion about the difficulties that prevent learners from writing accurately and correctly. Skilled and struggling writers are addressed. It also includes some points of interest: the nature and causes of writing difficulties, common errors, and their sources. It also sheds light on the main factors affecting L1 use in L2 writing, and assessment difficulties for writing EFL learners. Finally, it discusses improving writing skill.

**The third chapter** is devoted to analyze and discuss the data obtained from the three data collection tools: teachers' questionnaire, pupils' interview, and the analysis of pupils' written text. In addition, it offers some useful recommendations to help teachers to reduce these difficulties and pupils who are not able to produce a good piece of writing.

# **CHAPTER ONE**



## Chapter one: The writing skill

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## **Introduction**

Writing is a specific way to communicate. It plays an important role in teaching and learning processes to help learners to gain proficiency in a foreign language. It is considered as the most important skill, when it is compared to the other skills: speaking, reading, and listening. Moreover, learning to write is very essential for all the life domains. This chapter tackles a theoretical background on writing and everything related to it. First, we will provide some definitions about writing related to various terms, such as activity, process and skill, and then we are going to discuss the importance of writing and writing process, which depends on some stages. Next, we will highlight the methods used in the learning process and the relationship between meta-cognition and writing, as well as the most important criteria for obtaining good written production. We will also look at the relationship between writing and reading. Finally, we will discuss the positive and negative attitudes of learners toward writing.

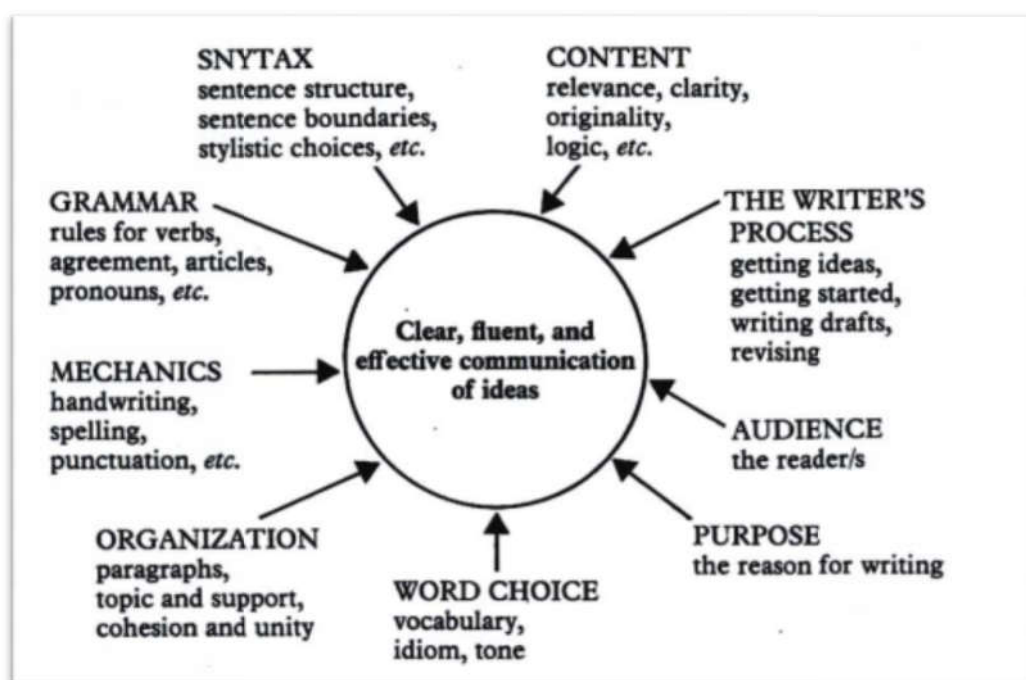
### **1.1. Definition of the writing skill**

Writing is an essential skill; it is a mean in which we can express our ideas and opinion. There are several definitions from many scholars who attempted to give a definition to this term. Generally, writing means words that have been written or printed; the way a person writes (Hornby, 2006, p.820, Oxford word power dictionary). Rogers (2005) defines writing as "The use of graphic marks to represent specific linguistic utterances" (p.2). To explain, writing is a language using symbols which represents the production of sounds, but it concerns rules which relate those symbols that they represent language in clear form; it considers as a great challenge related with the aspects of language. In the one hand, Jairos (2012) points out that "writing requires greater precision and care than speech as it is more formal activity producing a permanent record, when we speak we gauge our listener and clarify any points which have not been comprehended, as

such in interaction takes places in a piece of writing" (p.72). It means that writing is very different from speech because it requires great precision and care. It is a more formal activity because it relies on recording to translate a verbal message. Writing serves to deliver a message to the reader, so it must be clear and understandable.

Writing seems to be clear and understandable which makes the writer follows a process to get an accurate written product.

In the other hand, Hyland (2003) defines writing as "Marks on a paper or screen, a coherent arrangement of words, clauses and sentences structured according to a system of rules" (p.3). It is a matter of coherence and following rules of writing to reach good written text that is grammatically and structurally correct. The following diagram shows the elements that are activated when a piece of writing is produced.



**Figure 1.1.** Producing a piece of writing. Adopted from *Techniques in teaching writing* (p.6), by A. Raimes, 1983, New York: Oxford University Press.

As it can be seen above, writers require to take into consideration many aspects when writing, such as grammar, syntax, organization, word choice, purpose, and even the

intended readers. Raimes (1983) insisted on the mastery of these components. Due to its great importance, we find it worth identifying. The content is indeed very important, it refers to the subject matter; it should be clear and represent all the needed information and details that help the audience to understand the writing composition (Scarry & Scarry, 2014, p. 46). The organization is also important. Any piece of writing should be well presented, well-structured, and well-organized. It helps the reader to follow the process of ideas easily and clearly (Starkey, 2004, p.4). Grammar is considered as an essential component since any piece of writing should be governed by rules of grammar. Style is also an important component. The choice of words helps to attract the reader's attention. While writing, the learner should select words that give power, more quality to the text, is concerned with choosing words and tone and structural relationships between words (Madhukar, 2005, p.84). Mechanics are very fundamental for effective writing. The use of mechanics means the use of capitalization, punctuation, spelling and good handwriting. The use of mechanics helps the reader to comprehend the text, to follow ideas smoothly and easily (Murray & Hughes, 2008, p.185). Coherence is a key requirement for any system that produce text. It refers to clear connections between ideas, between sentences, and between paragraphs (Raimes, 1983, p.35).

It is a common fact that writing is a difficult task. Many learners consider it a burden and a very complex skill. Harris (1993, p. 122) states that writing is a complex activity. It is of fundamental importance for learning, for developing the personality of the learner, and for achievement in the education system. Teachers need to make a great, ongoing effort to find the leading way to help learners to get a good piece of writing as a writer. According to Hedge (2005), "Writing is a process. In fact, it is a complex process with a number of operations going on simultaneously. Moreover, some writers seem to have a much better understanding of how to make the process work effectively for them and

consequently produce more successful pieces of writing"(p.19). Judging from the definitions above, we can deduce that writing is a process that relies on complex and fundamental activities towards an educational system that takes place simultaneously to produce a successful piece of writing.

Through all the definitions presented above, we conclude that writing is a complex process and activity for arranging and producing a written form in which the writer uses a particular compatibility between variables of linguistic aspects (spelling words, sentence structure, punctuation, etc.) To express their thought in order to make people understand what they read as readers.

Whereas "Skill", according to Webster (1968, p.50) dictionary, means technical competence without insight or understanding or the ability for further elaboration or development. In addition, Hornby (2000) defines skill as "The ability to do something well especially because of training and practice"(Oxford advanced learner's dictionary, p.1255).

From the previous idea, writing skill is defined as the technical competence to arrange and produce a written form in which the writer uses a specific agreement for linguistic aspects variables (spelling words, sentence structure, punctuation, etc.) In order to express the ideas, thoughts, opinions, and feelings which makes readers can comprehend. Writing plays a great role in learning; it is differ from speaking in expressing thoughts because it deals with the grammar rules and the structure.

## **1.2. Importance of writing**

Writing is very crucial that the most context situations such as school, workplace, and society need a specific level of writing skill, and each context has its features. In the school situation for example its distinct (Graham and Perin, 2007, pp. 9-10), because writing skill used a special process, and it is a means of extending and deeping learner's knowledge. This situation based on special environment (classroom) and the teacher which

considers the guider that provides learners with appropriate instructions, which help them in their leaning.

In addition, Carroll (1990) views that "writing allows us to share our communication not only with our contemporaries, but also with future generations, it permit people from the near and far distant past to speak us" (p.1). In meaning, writing as a means of communication between peoples everywhere through the knowledge, because when we use it, we can transmit messages, express our thoughts, develop our communication, and exchange feedback.

Thus, writing skill is very important if they are learners or they are worker. All in all, writing skill can be used in every field of our life situations.

### **1.3. Writing process**

Writing as a process focuses more on the set of stages of writing which are followed until the final production. For this point, Zamel (1983) States that "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (as cited in Hyland, 2003, p.11). Simply means, writing is a cognitive process to writing activity; ameliorate learners' abilities to express their ideas while trying to achieve meaning in planning and writing accurately. In connection to this point, Berbache (2007) defines the process of writing as "An instructional model that focuses on the stages of planning, drafting, and revising, as a part of a recursive, non-linear, sequence, rather than on the final product only, in this approach, students are expected to write multiple drafts of a paper and make changes in their paper based on the feedback they receive" (p.11). This model is based on following regular and sequential steps such as planning, drafting and review without looking at the final curriculum, which confirms learners' use of drafts in order to make changes to the first product according to the notes provided by the teacher.

Harmer (2004, pp. 4-6) points out that this process may be influenced by the content of writing and the medium (tool), such as pen, paper, computer word file, and chat. This process has four essential elements: planning, drafting, editing and final draft. These elements work together to provide an accurate piece of writing.

#### **1.4. Approaches to teaching writing**

Being a good writer is not something innate or born; instead, it is learned by practice usually in formal and informal settings. Writing can be taught in different methods using different approaches. Therefore, many EFL teachers and researchers are searching for effective approaches that positively influence teaching-learning processes.

##### **1.4.1. Product based approach**

The product approach is one of the oldest approaches that it focuses on the final written products for learners. The main goals that the product approach focuses on are writing coherent and relevant pieces and getting students to acquire language proficiency. In addition, Gabriellatos (2002), defines the product approach as, "A traditional approach in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, usually is presented and analyzed at an early stage" (p. 5). This means that the learner takes a sample of the text and imitates it to write a new piece of writing.

According to Steele (2004, as cited in Hasan & Akhand, 2010, p. 78), product approach model contains four stages that learner follows to produce a piece of writing:

**a. Stage one:** In this stage, students are given the model text in order to study it in-depth with care and focus on important aspects and features. For example, giving a typical text represented by a formal essay, their focus may be on the method of introduction, body, deduction, how to write an attractive thesis statement and even the language used. Learners highlight any aspect that might be useful in writing a similar aspect.



**b. Stage two:** This stage consists of a tight practice of distinctive features, and this practice is usually isolated from others. So if students are studying a formal letter, they must use the language of formal requests.

**c. Stage three:** This is the most important stage where ideas are organized. Some of researcher as Broughely (1997), Sadek (2007) and Tribble (1997) support this approach because they believe that organizing ideas is more important than ideas themselves and the importance of controlling language.

**d. Stage four:** This is the end product of the learning process. Students choose comparable writing assignments. To demonstrate the level of fluency and proficiency of the language used in speech, so that they use the skills, structures, and vocabulary individually that have been learned through the teaching process to produce the product.

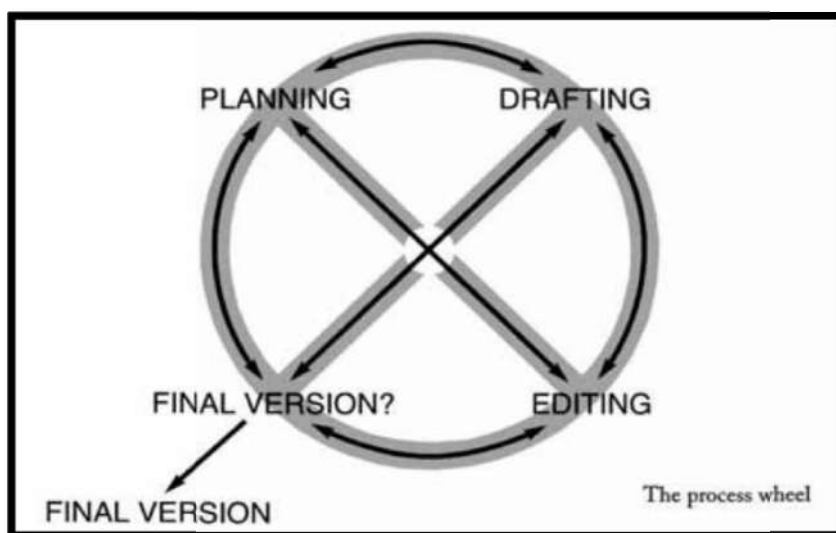
#### **1.4.2. Process based approach**

Previously, writing was associated with accuracy and traditional teaching, that is, teachers ask students to write to improve language and standardize elements of grammar, and then the final product serves only to correct aspects of the language. However, more recent studies in the field of writing confirmed that learning to write is not limited to asking learners about something in a particular subject without taking the purpose and audience into account. Also, learning to write is a process that relies on following a series of steps to reach the final product. More specifically, the process approach emerged as a new approach with new steps. Kroll (1990) defines process approach as follows:

The "process approach" serves today as an umbrella term for many types of writing courses .... What the term captures is the fact that student writers engage in their writing tasks through a cyclical approach rather than a single-shot approach. They are not expected to produce and submit complete and polished responses to their writing assignments without going through stages of drafting and receiving feedback

on their drafts, be it from peers and/or from the teacher, followed by revision of their evolving texts. (pp. 220-221)

To illustrate, this approach is very important for many types of writing courses, what the term embodies is the fact that learners participate in their writing assignments through a periodic approach rather than one approach. In addition to, they are not expected to write and provide complete and refined responses to their writing tasks without following the stages of drafting and receiving notes on their drafts from their peers or from the teacher, followed by a review of their evolving texts.



**Figure 1.1. The Process Approach adopted from How to teach writing (p.6) by J. Harmer, 2004, London: Person Education Limited.**

#### **1.4.2.1. Stages of process based approach**

Previously, we have reached that writing is a process. This process is very complex and consists of a number of stages. These stages allow the writer to reach the final product with more success.

**a. Planning (pre-writing):** Planning is supposed to be systematic and simple; it is the first stage to start writing. Lipson (2005, pp.14-15) claims that there is no need to draw a plan; the most important thing is to have this plan in your mind. In addition, he added that

this plan is not a final copy; it may be modified either by adding new ideas or by deleting others. When learners write, they must have a clear message, and a clear purpose, as well as the target audience or audience, must be defined from the start. After the writers formed ideas on this topic, they began to focus on developing a plan for the piece they would write.

**b. Drafting:** Focusing on the model, not the content, learners begin their first draft by writing their ideas on paper even without organizing them. Certainly, they do not have to focus more on spelling mistakes or word choice; all that matters is what they have in their minds, and the messages they want to convey (Smith, 2003, p.14). At this point, the writer has clear ideas, which makes it easy for them by writing some notes to make the necessary changes and adjustments.

**c. Revising:** To write a piece of paper, learners should think about design, text style, correct spelling, precise grammar, and punctuation, which are the main aspects of any part of writing. With the same idea, "Good writers tend to concentrate on getting the content right first and leave details like correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar until later" (Hedge, 2005, p. 5). To put it differently, after generating ideas in the second stage (draft), and put them on a sheet without taking into account any aspects, the content should be revised later. Hence, the first revision of the paragraph is review, and content regulation should be organized through some general aspects of clarity, such as coherence, unity, purpose and subject consistency, and style relevance to the content.

**d. Editing:** Editing is the last stage in the writing process; it deals with errors at the sentence level and tries to correct them. Writing makes the writer able to convey ideas and useful writing that allow mistakes and errors to be made as there must be an editing process at a later time.

The editing phase tends to check if there is a syntax error, try to fix it, and correct other errors. These errors may include subject- verb agreement, punctuation, word choice and use, spelling, grammatical parts and grammatical errors in a sentence, pronunciation verification, and misplaced modifiers (Smith, 2003, p.15).

### **1.5. Meta-cognition and writing**

Flavell (1976) is considered one of the first scholars to introduce the term meta-cognition in education. He defines Metacognition as "One's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and products and the active monitoring and consequential regulation of those processes in relation to cognitive object or data on which they bear"(p. 232). Simply put, how learners think about thinking when it comes to writing. In other words, metacognition deals with how students understand their writing processes, and how their processes are adapted to evolving requirements that and how their processes are adapted to evolving requirements that teach the characteristics of relevant information or data. It consists of metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive experience.

According to Tavakoli (2012) dictionary,

Cognition is the use or handling of knowledge. Hence, (a) the faculty which permits us to think and reason and (b) the process involved in thought and reasoning. It is sometimes contrasted with **metacognition**, which can be defined as ‘thinking about thinking’ and involves preplanning a cognitive process, exercising control over the process or taking steps to ensure that its results are stored long term. Metacognition involves some degree of awareness, whereas cognitive processes may not be available to report (p.62).

Metacognition plays an important role in developing writing skill through the high level of applications of its strategies as planning, monitoring, and evaluation that determine

the effectiveness of learning. It can improve the awareness, writing performance, and increase learner's satisfaction (Anderson, 2002, p.3).

Metacognitive strategies are processes or mental skills, methods, and procedures that learners use to organize their learning process. They are directly responsible for carrying out the writing task, and it includes three main strategies such as planning, evaluating and monitoring. Metacognitive writing strategies is a term used in information processing theory to refer to an "executive" function and refers to a strategy that learners use as a means to manage, monitor, and evaluate their own learning activities. These strategies have an effect on writing skills related to the process (Bransford et al., 2000; Wolfe (n.d); Wenden, 1991). Consequently, the strategies for metacognitive writing are planning, monitoring, and evaluating.

### **1.5.1. Planning**

Planning includes finding focus on purpose, audience, ideas and strategies to be used. According to Flower and Hayes (1981, pp.372-373), planning takes places before writing, but some writers also plan their written productions even while writing their composition. Planning is written more efficiently by brainstorming the entire class or small group. If done in a group, it is desirable for each learner to have their job: idea creator, writer or criticizer. However, planning can be done individually as well. The draft plan consists, at a later time, in the writing process, which may be revised and subject to changes in the component parts (add or omit) and their arrangement. Planning may also include brainstorming some keywords and choosing the basic tense of the writing piece.

According to Flower and Hayes (1981, p. 372), planning is the pre-writing phase where learners gather information about their topic by using different strategies such as brainstorming, clustering, visualizing, mapping, asking "wh" questions about the topic.

**a. Brainstorming:** brainstorming is when the learners freely write down all ideas in the order which they occur to learners. Unlike freewriting, this technique needs the writers record only general ideas and phrases. Because learners are completing this task with a goal to arrive at many ideas quickly, no idea is too stupid as they can without worrying about grammar, spelling, organization, or the quality of the ideas (Raimes, 1983, p.69). In addition, Smith (2000) defines brainstorming as "A process in which two or more heads spin out creativity with more zag than any one mind"(p.3). Brainstorming can be done individually or in groups.

**b. Clustering/mapping:** It is used to set up a relationship between the ideas of the learner. To cluster ideas, the learner writes the topic in the middle of the paper. Circle it, surround that circle with related ideas, and connect the two together with lines. If a few ideas lead to more specific ideas, write them down as emanating from the main ideas (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p.374).

**c. Asking questions:** the learners write down their question they have about their topic. They circle the ones they want to address in their papers. These question based on "wh" question, such as who, what, where, when, why, how (Raimes, 1983, p.69).

### **1.5.2. Monitoring**

Monitoring includes control of the writing process while writing the text. It refers to verifying and checking progress in terms of global features, such as content and organization, as well as local aspects such as grammar rules and mechanics. This can be done more effectively by individual writers (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p.374).

### **1.5.3. Evaluating**

It takes place after writing, Flower and Hayes (1981, p.374) states that evaluating consists of reviewing the written text in terms of the features of international and local writing, as well as with regard to the strategies used to complete the writing tasks. Evaluating is most effectively performed in pairs (peer evaluation): two writers exchange their papers, and after looking at them, they discuss the improvements that must be made. However, students should be taught to do self-editing and correction as well. They need to develop a strategy for it (what needs to be checked first: the contents, the structure of the language, because it is confusing, especially for less experienced writers to do all three at once.

Metacognitive writing strategies can improve writing performance and increase their satisfaction. Of all the learning strategies, the metacognitive strategy is a high-level executive skill that includes planning, monitoring and evaluation.

### **1.6. Criteria of good writing**

Writing a piece is a very important and modern skill because it is subject to distinct standards and rules, in order to produce a very successful written text that is very structured and clear. Zinsser (2001) says, "Managers at every level are prisoners of the notion that a simple style is a mirror that reflects a simple mind. Actually, a simple style is the outcome of hard work and hard thinking; a complex style is a mirror that reflects a muddled thinker or a person too arrogant, or dumb, or too lazy to organize his ideas"(p. 28). Zinsser explains that the fundamentals of writing are paragraph structure, paragraph language, mechanics, and content. Every writer should respect these writing principles as they are the bridge to a fun and enjoyable piece of writing.

### 1.6.1. Paragraph structure

A paragraph is a group of sentences about one topic. Paragraph sentences together explain the writer's main idea (the most important idea) on the topic. In academic writing, the paragraph is often between five and ten sentences, the length of a paragraph depends on the type of topic and the first sentence of a short paragraph is usually indented. The structure of paragraph includes topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence (Dorothy & Rumisek, 2003; Oshima & Hogue, 2006; Bram, 1995).

#### 1.6.1.1. Topic sentence

The topic sentence is the main idea of a paragraph, and it is the most common sentence in the paragraph. It usually comes first in a paragraph. It gives the writer the main idea or opinion on the topic and helps the reader understand what the paragraph will talk about (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, pp.4-5). The topic sentence comprises one subject and one verb. We present some examples as follow:

- a. Many religious rules arose from the health needs of ancient times.
- b. In my opinion, television commercials for cosmetics lie to woman.
- c. Taste and appearance are both important in Japanese cuisine. (adopted from Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p.9)

It contains two parts topic and controlling idea; the topic indicates the paragraph subject, the controlling idea states what the paragraph will tell next, it helps the reader to understand the purpose of writing paragraph (Saraka, 1988, p.30). The following examples illustrate the topic sentence (adopted from Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p.4):

- a. Driving on freeways requires skill and alertness.  
                ↓  ↓  
                Topic  Controlling idea
- b. The rise of indie films is due to several factors.  
                ↓  ↓  
                Topic  Controlling idea



Additionally, Oshima & Hogue (2006) suggests some points when the learner wants to write a good topic sentence. The learner should remember and follow these points:

- a. A topic sentence must be a complete sentence, with a subject and verb.
- b. A topic sentence should be neither too general nor too specific. If it is too general, the reader cannot tell exactly what the paragraph is going to discuss. If it is too specific, the writer will not have anything to write about in the rest of the paragraph.
- c. A topic sentence should not have unrelated controlling ideas" (p.10)

#### **1.6.1.2. Supporting sentences**

Supporting sentences are the sentences that talk about the topic sentence or explain it. They are more detailed ideas that come after the topic sentence. After selecting a topic and writing a topic sentence, the writer develops his/her main idea by adding more information to clarify what it means. This unit explains three common ways to develop a paragraph by providing an explanation (to clarify an action or believe by reasons or justifications), giving details (related to definitions and features; the full information), and giving an example (using *for example*, *for instance* and *such as*) (Saraka, 1988, p.30).

#### **1.6.1.3. Concluding sentence**

Concluding sentence may be the last sentence of a paragraph. The writer can end a paragraph by repeating the main idea or just a final comment on the topic, also called the last sentence of the closing sentence paragraph. It summarizes key points or reformulates the main idea in a different way. The sentence that summarizes the paragraph reminds the reader of what the writer's main idea and support points were. The sentence that brings back the main idea should give the same information in a slightly different way, possibly using different words or using a different word arrangement. The concluding sentence should not present a new point (Zemach & Rumisek, 2003, p.19).

From concluding sentences, Reid (1994, p.42) states that there are five types can be used in a paragraph. They are:

- a. Summarizes the materials in the paragraph.
- b. Offers solution to the problem stated in the paragraph
- c. Predict a situation that will result or occur from the statement made in the paragraph.
- d. Makes a recommendation concerning materials presented in the paragraph.
- e. States a conclusion to information given in the paragraph (p.42)

We can summarize that a concluding sentence is a final sentence that leaves the reader with important thoughts on the topic of the paragraph. Whereas, some types of concluding sentences summarize information, offer solutions, state a conclusion, make a recommendation, or predict a situation.

**Example:**

*"I will never eat dinner at little French Bistro again. The restaurant is not very clean. You can see dust in the corners and on the shelves. The food is expensive, but the portions are small I never feel full after I have finished eating. In addition, the waiters are not very friendly. For these reasons, I will not visit that restaurant again".* (Adopted from Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p. 20)

**Concluding sentence**

**1.6.2. Paragraph language**

Language of paragraph is very important for getting a good piece of writing. For this Hedge (2005, p. 7) writes "All good writing is swimming under water and holding your breath". This saying makes clear that even experienced writers experience difficulties and moments of frustration while writing. Moreover, "Writing is a complex process with a number of operations going on simultaneously" (Hedge, 2005, p. 50). As a result, writing appears to be the most demanding and difficult skill that not only EFL learners, but even native English speakers struggle to master this skill. Furthermore, as Tribble (1996, p.3)

argued that "an ability to write appropriately and effectively is, however, something which evades many of us in our mother tongue or in any other languages we may wish to learn"; furthermore, the difficulty of writing may be that the writer strives to respect several aspects in the act of writing such as: grammar, word choice, spelling, and use of transitional words and expressions.

#### **1.6.2.1. Grammar**

Accuracy is essential element that all learners focus on when they write. They believe that they can reach it with the implementation of the grammatical rules in their written production.

Grammar rules of a language governing the sounds, words, sentences, and other elements, as well as their combination and interpretation. The word grammar also denotes the study of these abstract features or a book presenting these rules. In a restricted sense, the term refers only to the study of sentence and word structure (syntax and morphology), excluding vocabulary and pronunciation (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015). That is to say, grammar is a kind of rules that governs forms, the structures of sentences and the combinations of the meaning. These rules represent by the written productions as books which allow readers to comprehend the meaning that the structure contains vocabulary and pronunciation. Besides, Richards and Reppen (2014) argue that

Grammar is the system of rules used to create sentences refers to the knowledge of parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses and syntactic structures used to create grammatically well-formed sentences in English. The rules for constructing grammatically correct sentences belong to sentence grammar (p.8).

This means that grammar is a system used to build language, as this system indicates specific knowledge about how words, tense sentences and phrases are to be interpreted to

speak, sentences are related to issuing grammatically correct sentences, and the learner must learn the grammar of practice with practice through grammar books.

In other side, "Grammar is the underlying structure of a language that any native speaker of that language knows intuitively" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019, p. 2), native speakers of English language are unconsciously having the knowledge about grammatical rules. However, EFL learners require tremendous instructions about grammar rules which help them to study sound, system of word formation, patterns of word arrangement, meaning.

#### **1.6.2.2. Word choice**

According to Starkey (2004, pp. 21-37), writers will have an accurate writing when they use the best way which is the choosing of the right words to express their ideas, that make the readers comprehend what the writer mean. In order to achieve this goal, the writer should take attention to the words because there are many words have two dimensions of meaning, such as denotation (i.e., the literal meaning) and connotation (i.e., the implied meaning). In addition, they acquire to choose the correct ones to reach their message toward the reader because there are many words that have the same form, but they are different in meaning. In other hand, writer should be aware of the denotative meaning of words they use and remember their implied meaning which involves emotions, cultural assumptions and suggestions in order to get proper language. Also, they should use inclusive language to prevent slang, clichés, and buzzwords. The writer should understand the correct meaning of the word to avoid spelling errors, they able to correct them by using of application of spelling rules or spelling programs of checkers.

Therefore, the right word choice is the best way to learners to carry out their ideas and expressions in their written production correctly. Some learners are not aware of the

embedded meaning of words, for this idea, learners must take in their consideration both denotation and connotation.

**Example 1:** "My past memories were foggy. When I thought about my past, I felt confused and frightened".

**VS** "My foggy memories confused and frightened me".

Repetition sentence subject can bog down the essay in unnecessarily lengthy discussion of simple ideas.

**Example 2:** "The model was bony" and "The model was slender".

The underlined words have the same denotation of skinny or small, but the connotation of "bony" implies unhealthy weight while does not "slender".

### 1.6.2.3. Spelling

Spelling is vitally important in representing meaning of words in sentences as grammar and other mechanics. It has specific norms which regulate the method of using graphemes to introduce a language in its written form. In other words, spelling is the rendering of speech sound (phoneme) into writing (grapheme).

Furthermore, Harmer (2004, p.46) states that English spelling is complex, but it is not random because there are acceptable rules which govern spelling skill. EFL learners have the ability to master this sub skill easily in practical way. EFL learners should be aware how they use different spellings to distinguish between homophones (the same sound but the spelling is different). In addition, academic writing needs a high level of accuracy, because "poor spelling makes for poor communication and it depends in the quality of writing" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019, p. 4). So, the wrong spelling influences the reader's thoughts.

#### **1.6.2.4. Use of transitional words and expressions**

Halliday and Hasan (1976) define transitions as "Phrases or words used to connect one idea and are used by the writer to help the reader progress from one significance idea to the next"(p. 27). In the meaning, transitional words and phrases also help to establish coherence by providing bridges between sentences within a paragraph and between paragraphs. For example, words and phrases like (also, in addition to, additionally, furthermore) refer to readers that the relationship between two sentences is an addition relationship. Groups of other words and phrases can create detail or example relationships (for example, that is, more specifically), logic (hence, and therefore, in conclusion), and contrast (so far, However, nevertheless) or similarity ("similarly", "likewise", "in other words").

When using transitional words and phrases, it may be tempting to stick to one or two without thinking about the meaning, but this can lead to confusion rather than flow. Thus, make sure that the link which the writer creates between his/her sentences is clear and logical (Carroll, 1990, pp. 16-17).

If the writer writes "so", for example, he/she makes sure that the following sentence, in fact, is flowing logically from the previous sentence; if he writes "likewise", he makes sure that there is a similarity between the two ideas. Also remember that transitions can come not only at the beginning of a sentence but also in the middle.

#### **1.6.3. Mechanics**

In composition, mechanics refers to how words seem, and how they are spelled or arranged on paper. The fact that the first word in a paragraph is usually indented, such as, is a mechanical matter (Kane, 2000, p. 15). Writing conventions require that the sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with punctuation (a period, question mark, or exclamation mark). These types of mechanics or conventions are very important in putting

together a good quality piece of writing because no matter how original the ideas of the learners are, if they cannot be expressed in a clear and correct way. Starkey (2004) deals with the mechanics of writing in terms of punctuation and capitalization.

### **1.6.3.1. Punctuation**

Punctuation is also an important skill. It is about a series of conventions that help the reader to understand the learners' thoughts in order. The effective writing is based on the quality of written production which includes the use of punctuations such as commas, full stops, sentences and paragraph boundaries. The complexity and intelligence in expression would not be possible without punctuation, which plays a less than realistic role in the construction process. On the one hand, punctuation marks the component messages of a complex sentence and thus help the reading process. On the second hand, the appropriate use of punctuation calls on the reader to pay particular attention to individual information within the sentence (Hannay & Mackenzie, 1996, p.205).

According to Harmer (2004, p.49), if this punctuation is not used correctly, the written work will become difficult to comprehend. But, when the learners want to achieve an accurate written production, they should apply them in correct way to have a formal and effective writing. The learner should master punctuation in order to become the best writer in English language.

In this study, we deal with some punctuation marks that are considered mostly used in writing. (adopted from Straus, 2008, pp.52-60).

#### **a. Period (.)**

**Rule 1:** A period is used at the end of the sentence, and the next sentence begins with capital letter.

Example: I know that M.D. She is my sister-in-law.

**Rule 2:** use a period after an indirect question

Example: He asked where his suitcase was.

**Rule 3**: use a period

Example: I know that you would never break my trust intentionally.

**b. Comma (,)**

**Rule 1**: Use comma to separate words and word groups with series of three or more, to avoid confusion.

Example: My 10 million estate is to be split among my husband, daughter, son, and nephew.

**Rule 2**: Use comma to separate two adjectives when the word "and" can be inserted between them.

Example: he is strong, healthy man. / He is strong **and** healthy man. (no comma)

**Rule 3**: Use comma to separate the day of the month from the year and after the year.

Example: Belgacem HABA was born on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1957, in El-Meghayer, El-Oued.

**c. Question mark (?)**

**Rule 1**: Use a question mark only after a direct question.

Examples: Will you go with me? I asked if he would go with me.

**Rule 2**: Use a question mark when a sentence is half statement and half question.

Example: you do care, do not you?

**1.6.3.2. Capitalization**

Capitalization is also very important. It works with punctuation hand in hand. In most cases, writing skills are difficult for learners in their academic path. Therefore, teachers should help them to master basic principles and use them in their written production. The basic principles of writing are: grammar, vocabulary, spelling and mechanics. Where applying these principles is the successful way to develop their abilities



to write and write effectively. According to Starkey (2004), there are six appropriate positions that need capitalization (p.52):

- a. The first word of a sentence
- b. Proper nouns (names of people, places, and things)
- c. The first word of a complete quotation, but not a partial quotation.
- d. The first, last, and any other important words of a title.
- e. Languages.
- f. The pronoun *I*, and any contractions made with it.

In order to evaluate learners, the teacher uses procedures that are included in the curriculum. Therefore, students should develop their writing skills, especially in exams. This will be done by students practicing writing all forms of writing in order to be aware of all the characteristics of each type of structure and function.

#### **1.6.4. Paragraph content**

Writing in English in an academic context requires some entry criteria for the various aspects of writing that include unity, cohesion, and coherence. According to Halliday and Hassan (1976), an effective piece of writing is one that is united, coherent, and cohesive.

##### **1.6.4.1. Unity**

In writing, Unity is the connection of all ideas to one topic. According to Zemach and Rumisek (2003, p.78), in a paragraph or essay, all ideas must relate to topic sentence, and supporting ideas in a main text paragraph should relate to the topic sentence. Unity is considered the first characteristic of an effective paragraph, which indicates that all sentences in the paragraph explain, develop and support a main idea in some way (Davis & Liss, n.d, p.12). In other words, each paragraph must have a purpose in the writer's written production, and all sentences must present this purpose in one way or another. This means that all sentences - the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence -

should be more related to the sub-topic. They should all advance the purpose of the paragraph as well as the topic.

To achieve unity, start with a clear topic sentence. This does not mean that it should appear at the beginning of the paragraph, although the topic sentence usually appears in academic writing. But the important thing is that the main idea or purpose, mentioned in the topic sentence, determines the agenda for the rest of the paragraph (Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p.18). Since the topic sentence provides the standard idea, this sentence should be clear, concise and make a point about your topic. Once writer knows the point he/she wants to present in his/her topic sentence, writer can create a standard paragraph by making sure that all other sentences are clearly related to the first sentence.

Furthermore, Zemach and Rumisek (2003, p.80) states that unity in writing can be achieved by keeping each paragraph focuses on one topic sentence and keeping all paragraphs focus on one topic sentence and by using a similar structure in all aspects of our writing. The introduction paragraph introduces the thesis statement. The each body paragraphs have a topic sentence with the content that proves the thesis statement, and the concluding paragraph sums up the proof and restates the topic sentence.

#### **1.6.4.2. Coherence**

Coherence is a crucial element of effective writing that the learner should have an appropriate coherent in writing. Coherence is related to ideas which an abstract things as Davis and Liss (n.d) state "Coherent in paragraph means that all the ideas fit together in logical flow. In coherent paragraph, the relationship between ideas is clear, and one idea connects logically to the next" (p. 14). So, coherence is connected to the unity in which ideas are arranged in a clear and logical manner. When the text is uniform and coherent, the reader can easily understand key points. In addition to, it should make the reader aware that the writer is going to move from idea to other, as Ham-Lyoms & Heasley (2006) say,

"A text is coherent when the ideas, sentences, and details fit together in a way that helps readers follow the train of thought" (p.127), that through this smoothly organization the reader can understand and remember the ideas and guess the correct meaning.

In order to achieve coherent paragraph, the learner should follow certain order, this order is differ from paragraph and essay. This coherence occurs between sentences and between paragraphs (Carroll, 1990, p.7), and this connection needs some parameters such as examples, comparison, classification, process analysis, causes and effects, and analysis argumentation. According to Needels and Knapp (1994), to organize and give a sense to the leaner's writing product, For example, the learner collects some ideas which supporting the topic, and then classify those sentences from the general idea to the specific idea, and support the ideas with examples and a details explanation that develop logically the context in order to make a sense (as cited in Graham and Perin, 2007, p.14).

**Example:**

*"For me, a friend is someone who accepts you the way you are. A friend doesn't want you to change your personality or your style. I like people who don't care if the people they are with are wearing popular clothes or listening to trendy music."*(Adopted from Oshima & Hogue, 2006, p. 20)

**1.6.4.3. Cohesion**

Cohesion is a crucial element on academic writing that the unity between sentences is achieved. Halliday and Hasan (1976) view that "the concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text" (p.4). It is to say that, Cohesion is the semantic relationship between one element to another in the text. The text is cohesive when the elements are linked together and have a meaning to the reader. Cohesion occurs when the interpretation of one element depends on the other, that is, one element presupposes the other in advance.

Several definitions have been proposed by scholars to the term of cohesion. For example, cohesion is proposed by Crystal (2008, pp.62-63) that "it is the syntactic or semantic connectivity of linguistic forms at a surface-structure level of analysis". To illustrate, coherence is the process of interpretation that has been linked and reinforced with knowledge of particular patterns by reader. This process relates to the creation and interpretation of meaning.

The main function of cohesion is the formation of text that helps achieve the unity of the text as a whole, and there are other functions of the cohesion of text from which the text should be meaningful, showing the logical relationship between sentences and paragraphs. It also helps in expanding context and improving reading and comprehension skills (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p.4; McCarthy, 1991, p.27). Thus, cohesion is very important for a text, and it makes a sense to the reader. Cohesion concerns not only the grammar rules but also vocabulary. Subsequently, it is divided into grammatical and lexical cohesion (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Tanskanen, 2006, p.15) as follows:

**a. Grammatical cohesion:** it includes four types such as Reference (is used to describe the various ways in which things, people, events, are referred within text by using pronouns), Substitution (is the replacement of one linguistic item by another; it is used to avoid repetition of a particular item), Ellipsis (it is the deletion or omission of linguistic item) and Conjunction which is a word which joins words and sentences (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; McCarthy, 1991).

**b. Lexical cohesion:** lexical cohesion is established through the selection of vocabulary. It consist two categories which are reiteration (includes the repetition of the same word -synonym or near synonym - general word) and collocation (is the way that a particular word tends to appear or belong together) (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p.286; McCarthy, 1991, p.65). The following example shows cohesion in short paragraph:

*"My father is a teacher. I admire him a lot. I am considering becoming a teacher; too. My older brother works for a big company. My father really loves learning, so he is natural teacher. My father always helped me with my homework. I think I will become a teacher". (Adopted from Zemach & Rumisek, 2003, p.23)*

### **1.7. Integrating reading and writing skills**

English language as the other languages, it has four skills; productive skills (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (reading and listening). They are interrelated to an effective learning. Teaching writing as an independent skill; it is not sufficient to reach the level without the other skills. It requires to be related with the other skills for produce an appropriate written piece.

To clarify the relationship between writing skill and other language skills, Johnson (2008) demonstrates "Listening and hearing other people use language enhances children to speak, reading helps students become better writers, and writing helps in developing phonic knowledge and enhances reading fluency" (pp.7-8). It means that all language skills are interconnected, and the development of individual focuses on the usage of all skills.

Writing and reading are also two skills in teaching and learning language. The two skills work together and one completes the other. In addition, most of researchers gave importance to the relation of this dichotomy. The relation between reading and writing has been seen in terms: good readers, good writers. According to this relation, researchers give more interest in understanding the origin of this connection, some researchers point out that reading and writing as two skills which share the same processes. Hylland (2009) states that

Writing, together with reading, is an act of literacy: how we actually use language in our everyday lives. Modern conceptions of literacy encourage us to see writing as a

social practice rather than as an abstract skill separable from people and the places where they use texts (p. 48).

To explain, Hylland proved that there is a strong relationship between the two skills writing and reading. Literacy based on the two skills because of the usage in our everyday life. In addition, the modern perspectives engage people to give importance to writing which plays a great role in their life and consider it as a social phenomenon which all social categories use it where they need it.

Also, As Scribner and Cole (1981) say that

Literacy does not simply know how to read and write a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. It is worth considering the role of literacy as it helps us to understand how people make sense of their lives through their routine practices of writing and reading (as cited in Hylland, 2009, p. 48)

In other words, the two scholars prove that there is strong relation between writing and reading. Literacy is not only meant knowing how to write and read, but how to use this knowledge for specific purposes in specific context. Its goal is to understand others how they give meaning to their lives through the writing and reading practice style.

For the different definition about writing, Graham and Perin (2009) view that "writing is sometimes seen as the "flip side" of reading; it is often assumed that adolescents who are proficient readers must be proficient writers" (p.7). Their point of view falls under the category of competent readers, competent writers, however they focus on one category of society which is adolescents where a good reading teenager must be a skilled writer. Hylland (2003) points out that "reading provides input for both content and the appropriate means of its expression and a positive link that reflects the wider role of reading in developing composing skills" (p.17). To say that reading has a positive role in

developing writing skills through the inputs which provides for both the level and the appropriate means for expression.

Research indicates that second language writing skills cannot be successfully acquired through practice in writing alone but should also be supported with extensive reading. Some scholars such Krashen (1993), Carson and Leki (1993), and Grabe (2001) view that reading has been shown to have a positive impact on writing skills at several stages of proficiency. This because both processes involve the individual in building meaning by applying complex cognitive and linguistic capabilities that depend on problem-solving skills and activating existing knowledge of both content and structure.

### **1.8. Learner's attitudes toward writing**

Learners have attitudes toward writing when they come to school. Gardner (1980) defines attitude as "The sum total of man's instincts and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceive notions, fears, threats, and convictions about any specified topic" (p.267). In other words, attitudes are the way a person thinks or acts, and it is a complex state of mind that involves feeling, values, and tendencies to behave in certain ways. Accordingly, there is a connection between attitudes and writing achievements. Attitudes have indirect effect on achievements in learning to write. Petric (2002, p.17) exposes that attitudes are an integral part of writing construction, the attitudes that are formed as a result of writing experience affecting future writing behavior. This idea is supported by Musgrove (1988, p.8), who proves that the one's attitudes history will influence one's ability to write so that there is a strong relationship between learning attitudes and writing. Which means that attitude is a behavior; it can be positive or negative relates to the nature of the topic. The learner attitudes towards writing may be due to various factors, such as distance between reader and writer, self confidence, motivation, first language, age, language practice, educational levels, learning styles, and sociocultural variables (Rivers, 1981; Chastain,

1988; Brown, 2001; Richards & Renandya, 2002). Everyone knows learners who have a positive attitude or feeling with a high degree toward writing will show better results in the achievements of learning English language. Accordingly, Kara (2009, p.112) states that a positive attitude will lead to a positive behavior; therefore, better learning is the result of problem solving through the acquisition of writing skill, whereas negative attitude prevents learning and acts as an obstacle against it because the learners came with different methods and techniques for writing skill, and they face difficulties. When they are asked to write a paragraph, they are afraid to make mistakes in writing and are not confident in presenting their ideas through writing because they exceed their ability (Dornyei & Csizer, 2002; Brown, 2009). Also, Langan (2000) points out that "learners believe that writing is a natural gift than a learned skill" (p.12). To say that learners thought that writing is an innate thing and not an acquired skill.

Thus, attitudes positive or negative largely determine learners' success or failure in their attempts to learn not only language but also other topics.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have provided a theoretical background on writing and everything related to it. First, we provided some definitions about writing related to various terms, such as activity, process, and skill. Then, we addressed the importance of writing and its process, which depends on some of the stages followed. After that, we shed light on the approaches used in the learning process and on the relationship between metacognition and writing in addition to the most important criteria for obtaining good written production. We also touched on the relationship between writing and reading. Finally, we discussed the positive and negative attitudes of learners toward the direction of writing that play a vital role in promoting writing, which is a critical skill in academic success.



# CHAPTER TWO

## **Chapter two: Writing difficulties and errors of EFL learners**

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## **Introduction**

There is a complete agreement that writing is the most difficult skill because it mainly focuses on intensive trainings. Also, this difficulty can have a negative impact on the written production of learners because this difficulty does not only exist due to the level of expression and organization of ideas, but also lies in the process of linguistic construction (i.e., translating these ideas into a readable and understandable text). The learning process takes place in the presence of the teacher and the learner. The teacher is responsible for the teaching process and teaches the method of writing to learners correctly by using theories and techniques in order to reach the desired goals. Writing needs a great challenge because it is difficult skill; it requires efforts as trainings and practices to reach a good level in writing.

The second part of this dissertation is devoted to the difficulties that learners encounter while editing a written text, as we will first try to give the differences that exist between skilled and struggling writers. Second, we will highlight the nature of writing difficulties as well as the various factors that cause poor writing. Then, we will address the common errors in writing and their sources, followed by factors affecting the use of the first language while writing in English as foreign language texts. Ultimately, we will present assessment difficulties for EFL learners in addition to the most effective strategies which could improve struggling learners' writing.

### **2.1. Skilled versus struggling writers**

In academic contexts, clear and good writing often distinguish between excellent and poor grades. Actually, clear writing can aid learners illustrate their own ideas and thus improve the quality of their learning (Langer & Applebee, 1987, pp. 6-7).

Skilled and struggling writers differ from each other in several crucial ways. For one reason, good writers know more about writing than poor writers do: (a) Skilled writers

know more about their topic, as they have easy access to relevant ideas as they write; (b) They have more discourse knowledge, as they can differentiate between narrative, comparative, or argumentative texts because knowing the type of text is a crucial component of well-organized writing; and (c) Skilled writers know more about symbolic written language systems that include grammar, spelling, punctuation,... etc (Zamel, 1982, pp.195-209). Several researchers argue that good knowledge of a skilled writer decreases the knowledge workload linked with generating and organizing ideas, permitting them to compose texts more easily than struggling writers (Kellogg, 1987, p.256), as it is enjoyed by brilliant writers in other areas (Bryson et al., 1991; Chi & Koeske, 1983; Ericsson, 1996).

According to the model suggested by Flower and Hayes (1981, pp.114-115), the writing process has mainly three steps: planning and generating ideas; translating ideas into text; and revising and checking what one wrote. Not necessarily the writers go through these three steps in a linear manner, but often these individuals follow the three steps frequently. Consequently, translating ideas into text may lead to thinking about new ideas or reviewing an earlier part of a text to balance before returning to continue the translation process. Flower and Hayes (ibid) suggest that, compared to struggling writers, skilled writers are more active and more knowledgeable in the writing process. Additionally, (a) Skilled writers often spend more time planning and revising their text (Graham & Harris, 2009, p.115; Hayes & Flower, 1981; pp.372-374); (b) They are more active in observing their writing (Beal, 1990, p.155; Beal et al., 1990, p.275); and (c) They have a great awareness of their target audience (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, pp.17-22; Nystrand, 1986, p.234). Moreover, skilled writers convert knowledge when writing, while struggling writers often simply participate in "knowledge telling" without trying to organize their ideas clearly (Bryson et al., 1991, pp.69-73).

Pearl (1979, pp.326-330) also states that struggling writers monitor their writing through planning, writing, and editing, but they leave plenty errors in their final texts because they mix grammatical rules, fail to observe errors and fail to consider their target audience.

## **2.2. Nature of the writing difficulties**

According to Byrne (1993, p.4), writing is a difficult skill to master even in the mother language. Tribble (1997, p.65) claims that "writing is a difficult skill to acquire". This complexity lies in the stages of the process that we follow when writing, a lack of knowledge of the subject, etc. Writing difficulties might be due to physiological, linguistic, and cognitive causes. Bill and Burnaby (1984) have same perspective to Tribble (1997). They mention,

Writing is a very complex cognitive activity in which writers must show control over content, format, sentence, structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation, i.e., control at the sentence level. Besides, writers must be able to structure and integrate information cohesively and coherently within paragraphs and texts. (Bell & Burnaby, 1984, as cited in Nunan 1989, p. 23)

Linguistically speaking, language learners often have to find an alternative in the absence of speaking features. In addition, they should make efforts to keep communication open by considering the choice of sentence structure, as well as serial sentences, and how sentences are related to each other. The psychological part revolves, when learners write, write alone, without taking into account possible reactions or interactions, and since writing is a solidarity activity, and this is what makes it Difficult.

As far as the cognitive causes is concerned, learners must learn and master the written forms of the language and know the correct writing structures by following (a) punctuation in which learners are facing problems to insert them correctly to their writing

(Byrne,1993, p.16), (b) capitalization in which capital letters should appear at the beginning of first letters of a sentence, beginning of important words, in titles and topics, etc (Kroll, 1990), (c) spelling due to the influence of other languages, changing pronunciation, and other historical reasons; the English spelling system has become complex for learners, (d) content in which learners face problems exploring ideas and thinking about communicating them with others; this might be due to the traditional methods teachers use to teach spelling, punctuation, and grammar proficiency, and (e) organization (Gower et al, 1995, pp.114-116; Raimes, 1983, p.3; Leki, 1991, pp.11-26). In addition, learners must be able to present their ideas clearly to make them understandable.

Writing as a process seems very simple. It means to gather words, put them in sentences, and tie these sentences together to get a paragraph. However, it is not so easy. Writing is hard. Grenville (2001, p.7) emphasizes that what does happen in writing as in the movies; one just sits and takes others pen for a while, then thoughts come to mind without any effort or action. On the contrary, he states, "The trouble is how do you think up that attention-grabbing first sentence? Where do you go to find that really interesting stuff? What do you do if your mind is as blank as the paper you're staring at?" (p.7). To say that, he emphasizes that the difficulty of writing lies in thinking about the first sentence through which the reader can be attracted to continue reading by listing important and exciting thoughts, in addition to the need to find a solution when the writer is unable to write any word (i.e., writer's block).

### **2.3. Causes of writing difficulties**

The majority of EFL learners of English have difficulty writing for many causes. The following paragraph demonstrates some of the possible causes of difficulties affecting learners' writing. It includes writing instructions, the nature of writing process, lack of motivation, inadequate time, lack of practice, and teacher's feedback.

### **2.3.1. Writing instructions**

Teaching foreign languages is not an easy task at all, but it can be taught effectively by working hard and patiently to identify learners' needs and design efficacious curriculum to ameliorate the learning process. Therefore, instructors of writing skill need to study the problems and difficulties their learners face in the process of learning English and finding the appropriate tasks (Ansari, 2012, pp.519-520) for composing.

According to Al-Buainain (2007, pp.1-2), classroom instruction has an important role in dealing with errors. Various approaches, methods, strategies, and techniques are recommended to help EFL learners write well in English. It is the responsibility of teachers to adopt, modify, or develop remedial procedures and techniques that can reduce learners' errors and raise their level. Learners should always be encouraged to do remedial exercises in order to ameliorate their writing ability. Brief grammatical rules learning may be necessary to help learners perceive errors caused by excessive generalization and wrong parallelism.

Hunt et al. (2009) Focuses on detailed instructions as one of the factors in effective teaching, which includes the ability of teacher to explain exactly what is expected to be done by learners, and how they perform their tasks in a successful manner (as cited in Abu Rass, 2015, p.51). Likewise, Hall and Verplaetse (2000, pp.1-20) argue that teachers can make classroom learning effective as they play a critical role in enhancing the competence of language learners by acting as motivators, providers of accurate linguistic models, and assessors. In addition, Corbett (2003, as cited in Abu Rass, 2015, p.51) the teaching task is important in language learning because only a teacher can diagnose learners' needs and problems to help them. Thus, a language learning compatibility is acquired through having depth views on the various writing needs among the learners. Thus, teachers are expected to employ activities that improve the qualities of language learning process.

### **2.3.2. The nature of the writing process**

Writing is a complex process because it requires mastery of grammatical systems, conceptual thinking, and judgmental elements (Byrne, 1993, p.1). Byrne (1993, p.4) classifies the complexities of writing into psychological, linguistic, and cognitive problems. Grape and Kaplan (1996, p.6) believe that since writing does not come naturally, but is gained through constant effort and lots of practice, it becomes a complex skill.

Norrish (1993) says the following about the complexity of writing, "In written medium, information has to be transmitted without any aid from sources other than the language itself" (p. 65). It seems to follow from this that in writing more attention is needed to be paid to the grammatical and lexical systems than is the case with speech.

Likewise, regarding the difficulty of writing skill, Abu-Rass (2001, p. 30) says that writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers because the writers should balance multiple matters, such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics. In this regard, Ur (1991, p.163) writes, "Much higher standard of language are normally demanded in writing than in speech: more careful construction, more precise and varied vocabulary, and more correctness of expressions in general". Ur also states that writing is a messy work that requires going through a number of unordered drafts before reaching the final version.

### **2.3.3. Lack of motivation**

It is accepted in most areas of learning that motivation is necessary for success and achievement. This clearly means that motivation is closely related to achievement, and that learners' motivations could make the task easier and more fun for both teachers and learners.

In our case, motivation makes writing fun and enjoyable. Byrne (1993, p.4) views that writing difficulties are related to three categories of problems: Psychological,



linguistic and cognitive problems. An interest in psychological concepts of writing motivation has evolved recently; it officially started at the end of the 1970s.

Harmer (2007a, pp. 32-45) states that there are many hidden forces that discourage learners to achieve a good level in writing. Fear of failure. This implies fear of not achieving our goals or values in some context, specifically in the context of efficiency or effectiveness. It is also closely related to fear of rejection. The source of this fear of failure among most of our students is that they are afraid to make mistakes. Learners write because they see their friends write or may be under the influence of their teachers. When they write, they are driven by uncertainty. They feel doubtful about what they write. Moreover, some students avoid showing their writings; they intentionally hide their weaknesses and often do not intentionally fail because they are completely pessimistic and feel a failure in advance. The idea of failure should not be allowed to infiltrate the learners' awareness, but we cannot get rid-of it.

That is, the teacher's primary role is to foster and encourage students to write by making writing motivating and enjoyable. Dornyei (2005, pp.80-83) claims that one thing is at first the learner is honed with suitable motivational techniques. In other words, the teacher should be selective in choosing or exposing their learners to attractive topics and setting the purpose of writing these topics.

According to Byrne (1993), some learners feel secure if they are allowed to write. For such learners, writing is likely to be an aid to retention because they feel more at ease and relaxed (p.10). Moreover, Anxiety can be a cause for negative thoughts that distracts learners from doing their best. This feeling can also lead to a number of additional negative consequences. For example, when anxiety is directed inward, it causes self-doubt and hesitation which in turn causes learners to write with less and effective confidence.

Harmer (2007a, p.55) considered writing anxieties very dangerous in the sense that it can lead to a negative attitude towards writing. He goes on to discuss the reasons for students' fear of writing in a detailed manner. First, he mentioned the lack of practice even in the mother tongue. Second, the lack of anything that can be said can be an obstacle for students. Finally, some people are simply not interested in writing activity. He claimed that teachers should develop self-confidence among their students by building a "writing habit".

#### **2.3.4. Inadequate time**

Hedge (2005, p.11) states that the idea of time needs to be given attention because writing activities by nature have different stages which need ample time. Learners need time for gathering ideas, organizing their ideas, writing drafts, proof reading and re-writing. In line with this, White and Arndt (1991) state that "Time is needed to incubate, sift and shape ideas. Of all the skills, writing is one which most benefits from time"(as cited in Italo, 1999, p.47). This means, in the process approach to teaching writing, the quality of students' written work can be affected by the amount of time that they are allowed. Similarly, Raimes (1983) thinks that "time is a crucial element in the writing process and an element that distinguishes writing from speaking"(p.21). Time may also be a key factor in producing a text with full of control over organization and coherence. In addition, many students and teachers feel that writing under time pressure is a very unnatural situation and perhaps cannot lead them to produce compositions that are truly representative of their capabilities (Kroll, 1995, p. 140). Writing is an important aspect of language learning as it is considered primarily a reflexive activity that requires sufficient time to think about specific topics.

#### **2.3.5. Lack of practice**

Davies (1998) states that "Writing is essentially a creative process and good writers must learn to communicate their ideas clearly to an unseen audience" (p. 25). To illustrate,

writing is basically a creative process, and good writers must master the process of communicating their ideas clearly to readers who are invisible. This needs many practices. Both Grabe and Kaplan (1996, p.6) believe that writing does not come naturally but is gained through constant efforts and many practices. In addition, learners must bear responsibility for their own learning if purposeful learning is to take place. They also adds that the best way to learn any skill is to practice it. Furthermore, Hedge (2005) says "My own experience tells me that in order to become a good writer, a student needs to write a lot" (p. 11). For clarification, she sees from her experience that in order to become a good writer; the learner needs to practice writing a lot in order to master it and have the ability to communicate ideas in a correct way.

#### **2.3.6. Teacher's feedback**

We know that teachers should act by motivation, provocation, support, and even suggestion or advice to learners as well as reaction, response and correction. What is shared between these last three concepts is that each of them needs "notes" that encourages learners to do better, as Sárosdy et al (2006) report,

"Feedback refers to the information that learners receive from their teacher about their performance, which will help them take self-corrective action and improve their achievement. Learners receive feedback from several sources: themselves, the learning task, fellow students and the teacher" (p.121).

According to Harmer (2004, pp.108-113), the reaction of teachers toward their learners work can be done in two ways: "correcting" and "responding". With the word "correcting", we mean correcting students' writing mistakes for performance on issues, such as syntax, grammatical rules, collocation, etc. When the intervention of teacher is designed to help students edit and move to another new draft, the responding is more appropriate than correcting. This means that our task, as teachers, is not to determine what

is right or wrong, but to ask questions, offer suggestions, and indicate where a learner can improve his/her writing, either in the content or in the manner of his/her expression of thoughts. This type of feedback will improve students' level. This method of reaction makes the teacher an examiner and evaluator. Students are usually very interested in grades, but it is worth understanding where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Hence, teachers should "write at least a brief comment on their work where we mention task achievement" (Harmer, 2007a, p. 76). If these comments are positive, they will motivate learners. This means that learners will review their work again and try hard to improve their writing in the future. In some cases, excessive use of red ink will frustrate learners. Harmer (2007a) also noted that "most students find it very dispiriting if they get a piece of written work back and it is covered in red ink, underlinings, and crossings-out" (p. 120). This means that excessive correction is a problem that prevents learners to write. Even if some parts of writing are completely full of errors, excessive correction can have negative impacts on the students' attitudes. Thus, the teacher must reach and strike a balance between accuracy and honesty and be sensitive and sympathetic with learners.

Accordingly, to avoid all these problems, Byrne (1993, p.124) suggested useful and appropriate methods for correcting learners' work, which he called "selective correction". In other words, teachers have to correct something important from the paragraph. That is, they must tell their learners that they will only correct, for example, tenses, punctuation errors, spellings, paragraph organization, etc. In this way, learners can be directed to focus on this important aspect of writing, and to reduce correction; it all depends on the teacher himself. Also, Byrne (1993, p.125) and Harmer (2007a, p.149) proposed the use of written symbols instead of using the red ink. This will encourage learners to think about their mistakes to correct them by themselves.

Hence, learners need to know how effective their writing is as long as they want to improve. As these corrections are not only from teachers. Classmates have a role in the correction, and their feedback can be of great value. To be honest, our learners are not mature enough to accept their peers' corrections. They only look at teachers with crowded classrooms who give them the right feedback.

#### **2.4. Common errors**

Many attempts to classify deviation, or any form deviating from the desired target language form focus mainly on Chomsky (1965, p.10) differentiation between "competence" and "performance". Mistakes are "performance errors" or errors of performance that have varying degrees of seriousness and are either random guess or "slip" because they are due to "failure to use a system known correctly" (Brown, 1994, p. 205).

Writing is a complex task. It is the most difficult skill in a language to master (Corder, 1974). As such, it is impossible to find learners of foreign language not making mistakes in writing. These errors are expected during the process of learning. Corder (1974, p.250) defines errors as systematic deviations from the language norms being learned. Like Corder, Norrish (1983, p.7) defines "error" as a systematic deviation that occurs when the learner learns nothing and continues to "understand it (error) ". Edge (1989) defines errors as forms that language users could not correct by themselves despite their instruction. Also, James (1998, p.1) identifies a language error as an unsuccessful part of the language. He adds that they cannot correct their errors until they have additional knowledge on the subject. Corder (1967, p.162) considers errors a problem that should be removed as soon as possible. However, errors are now seen as a device that can assist in the learning process. It provides evidence of a learner's level in the target language, as mentioned by Gass and Selinker (1984, pp.102-103). Corder (1974) views that:

The study of error is part of the investigation of the process of language learning. In this respect it resembles methodologically the study of the acquisition of the mother tongue. It provides us with a picture of linguistic development of a learner and may give us indications as to the learning process" (p.125).

Studying and analyzing learners errors can help teachers discover areas of language that need more attention in teaching. Writing errors produced by English Language learners are studied by several studies (Chomsky, 1965; Kambal, 1980; Lin, 2002; Brown, 1994; Smith, 2001). These studies show that English language learners find it difficult to use tense, articles, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, spelling, punctuation marks, capital letters, word order, word choice ... Etc.

Corder (1967, pp.163-165) states that there are two types of errors: performance and competence errors. The first occurs when the learners are tired or in a hurry. This means that learners make mistakes in performance not because of incomplete learning but because of neglect, stress, fatigue, etc. The second is more dangerous because it reflects insufficient learning. Brown (2007, pp.240-245) sees errors as either global or local. Global errors impede communication; they prevent the message from understanding. On the contrary, local errors do not prevent the understanding of the message because there is usually a slight violation of one part of the sentence that allows the listener to guess the intended meaning.

Corder (as cited in Keshavarz, 1999) classifies errors into two groups: overt and covert errors. As he argues,

An overt error is easy to identify, because it is unquestionably ungrammatical at the sentence level. A covert error occurs in utterances that are superficially well formed but which do not mean what the learner intended them to mean. Therefore, it is not interpretable within the context of communication (p.70).

Errors can also be classified as interlingual (between languages) or intralingual (within a language) errors (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p.267). Interlanguage errors can be identified as transfer errors that result from the learner's first language features, for example grammatical, lexical, or factual errors. On the contrary, intralingual errors are over-generalization (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p.379) in the target language, resulting from ignorance of grammar constraints, incomplete grammar applications, and assumed misconceptions.

Hubbard et al (1996, pp.135-141) assort errors into four main categories, which are grammatical, syntactic, substance (fundamental), and lexical errors. Then, they classified grammatical errors into seven categories: prepositions, singular/plural nouns, adjectives, tenses, possessive case, relative clauses, and articles; syntactic errors into three categories: nouns/pronouns, subject/verb agreement, and word order; substance errors into three categories: capitalization, punctuation, and spelling; lexical errors into two categories: varied words, and idiom choice or usage.

Hendrickson (1987, p.357) also states, "Errors are signals that actual learning is taking place, they can indicate students' progress and success in language learning". To illustrate, errors can tell the teacher how much progress has been made toward the goal the learner has achieved, and therefore, what is left for him or her to learn.

## **2.5. Sources of errors in writing**

Language errors arise, as is defined by Norrish (1983, pp.21-42), from the first language of learners, translation from the first language, analysis of variance, the general system of difficulty, overgeneralization, incomplete application of grammar, errors caused by materials, and part of language creativity.

In writing, learners make errors easily because the information must be presented in a given target language. However, there is a risk that the language learner tends to focus on

errors rather than the supposed goal of the writing piece which is communication of ideas (Norrish, 1983, p.65). According to Brown (1994, p.205), errors of language learners come from systematic and non-systematic sources. Systematic sources contain errors of interference between languages from the original language and errors within the language within the target language. Non-systematic sources contain the sociolinguistic context of communication, psycho-linguistic cognitive strategies, and incalculable emotional variables.

Also, Richards (1973, pp.3-4) categorized sources of competence errors into two categories: (a) Errors between the languages (interlingual errors) caused by the interference of the mother tongue, and (b) linguistic (intralingual) and developmental errors that occur during the process of learning the second language at a stage where they do not have knowledge. Also, James (1998, pp. 173-189) states that there are four causes for errors which are: interlingual errors, intralingual errors, communication strategy-based errors, and induced errors.

### **2.5.1. Interlingual errors (mother-tongue influence)**

Interlingual errors are affected by the native languages that interfere with learning the target language. It is seen as a process in which learners use their knowledge of the first language to learn a second language. Learners translate word by word for idiomatic expressions, vocabulary, and even grammar from the first language of learners to the second language learning. In comparative analysis, it is believed that this type of errors committed by target language learners is predictable and the causes can be identified.

### **2.5.2. Intralingual errors**

The cause of intralingual errors is the target language (TL) itself. Regardless of the resort to L1 transfer, learners who are ignorant of the TL model at any level and any semester can do either of two things: they either set learning the required component, or



involve their own learning strategies, or they try to fill in the gap by resorting to strategies of communication.

Both types of strategies (Interlingual and intralingual) can be the source of error production. Errors resulting from learning strategies include:

- a. False analogy: Learners suppose that the new element B behaves like A: They know that "girl" (a) has the plural "girls" and they assume that "wife" (b) behaves in the same way, for that plural to "wives".
- b. Misanalysis: Learners form a wrong supposition. The misconception is the result of the learners does not understand the TL.
- c. Incomplete rule application: This is the opposite of over-generalization or one might call it "under-lack generalization" as learners do not use all the rules but rather change or decrease complex rules to simpler ones because they aim to simplify rather than try to get the whole complex structure.
- d. Exploiting redundancy: This error is caused by carrying a large excess. This appears throughout the system in the form of unnecessary morphology and double signals.
- e. Overlooking co-occurrence restrictions: This error is caused by this error is caused by ignoring exceptional rules.
- f. Hypercorrection (monitor overuse): This results in learners being cautious and strict in their rules. One might say that the deliberate suppression of learners to transfer a potential L1, for fear of error, is another form of excessive correction.
- g. Overgeneralization or system-simplification: The reason for this error is misuse of words or grammatical rules. (James ,1998, pp. 199-200)

### **2.5.3. Communication strategy- based errors**

From different perspectives, linguists define communication strategy in different ways. For example, Tarone (1980) studies CS from an interactional perspective while Brown (1994) looks at CS from an error resource perspective. Tarone (1980, p.420) defines communication strategy as the exchange of attempts of two interlocutors to agree on meaning in a situation where the required meaning strategy does not appear to be shared.

In terms of error resources, Brown (1994, p.137), Indicates that communication strategy is actually the process of interlingual transfer and the learning context as the learner attempts to convey a message to the listener or reader.

To some extent, we may identify some language forms not available to the learner at this point of contact. Then the communicative strategy can function as a conscious recruitment of the verbal and non-verbal mechanism to communicate the idea. Brown's definition of communication strategy can help us show the strategies the speaker used through error analysis.

**a.** Holistic strategies or approximation: The term "holistic" refers to learners' assumption that if they can say X in L2, they must be able to say Y. Since the required model is not available, it must be right to use another equivalent L2 element they have learned. It takes on a number of forms. The first of which is the use of a synonym.

**b.** Analytic strategies or circumlocution: Analytical strategies express the concept indirectly by implication (allusion) and not by direct reference. This type of error comes from learners' experience. James (1998, p.188) found that class learners used the L1 transfer strategy much more than acquirers (acquirers are people who self-learn, such as a taxi-driver, a foreign housekeeper, etc).

#### **2.5.4. Induced errors**

These errors are the result of learner misconceptions of definitions, examples, interpretations, and arranging practice opportunities offered by their teachers. In other words, errors occur through the teaching and learning process as follows:

- a. Materials-induced errors: Educational materials that make learners confused, for they make errors again and again.
- b. Teacher-talk induced errors: This type of error may occur by both native and non-native teachers if they do not submit standard TL models in the classroom.
- c. Exercise-based induced errors: Learners make errors while doing exercises, such as combining sentences. (James ,1998, pp. 189-199)

#### **2.6. Factors affecting the use of L1 in L2 writing**

The majority of learners of English as a foreign language think Arabic when composing. This problem is a major concern of many researchers, such as Harmer (2007b), Kroll (1997) and Starkey (2005)..., etc. In general, teachers of foreign language emphasize the need for EFL writers to think and write as much as possible in English. Friedlander (1997) states, "Writers do any of their work in their first language" (p. 109). This means that incorrect transfer of structures and vocabulary from the first language will prevent the acquisition of the English language. However, Friedlander (1990) indicates, "Writers will transfer writing abilities and strategies, whether good or deficient, from their first language to their second language" (p. 109). Regarding writing in first, second, or third language, Edelsky (1982) notes that "writing knowledge transfers across languages" (as cited in Friedlander, 1990, p. 109). This means that learners as writers use their L1 strategies and knowledge to help and assist L2 or FL writings. Jones and Tetroe (1987) as cited in Friedlander (1990, p.109), also claim that "writers transferred both good and weak writing skills from their first language to English". They add, "Weaker writers' failure to use

writing strategies in English was based on their failure to use these strategies in their first language (p.110). In other words, learners' writers, who have not acquired strategies in their first language, are not able to transfer them to their second or third language. In contrast, many other studies indicate that it is not necessary to be good writers on L1 to be so in L2, or to write in a third language. Carson et al (1990, p.110) concluded that adult acquisition of L2 literacy skills by other adults, who are proficient in reading and writing in their first language, is a complex phenomenon associated with numerous variables. There is another opposite opinion held by Blanchard and Root (2004) who argue,

It is like driving a car, if you have ever driven in another country, you know that some of the rules of the road may be different. Just as the rules of driving differ from country to another, the conventions of writing may change from language to another (p. 1).

This means that the conventions of writing differ from one language to another. In any case, no one is naturally gifted writer. Writing is a skill that can be learned, practiced, and mastered. Writing remains the most difficult skill to master even for native speakers. This fact is confirmed by Nunan (1989, p.35) who pointed out that "Writing is an extremely complex, cognitive activity for all which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously". Moreover, in terms of complexity and difficulty, many surveys have proven that production of written is not easy. In short, learners suffer from language transfer, for they usually use L1 to think and write in English.

## **2.7. Assessment difficulties of EFL learners writing**

Assessment is defined differently in the literature. Among many, it is defined as a systematic process of gathering information about learners' progress toward learning goals. Learners' performance can be measured in different ways, including paper and traditional tests, long responses (articles), original assignments, teacher, observation, and self-report

for the learner (Linn & Miller, 2005, p.26). On the other hand, Long et al (2011) qualified the assessment as "An endemic in education and for the most part is ongoing, informal, hourly, and daily" (p.51). In other words, they consider assessment as an epidemic, because it is one of the most important steps in education and the most difficult task.

Assessing learners' language performance is a complex activity either in the classroom or on the broad. Language teachers need to pick out an assessment style that matches their assessment purpose; develop the assessment tool for classroom use; administer the tool, score the tool, interpret the score and make appropriate decisions; communicate the results to the administrative offices; and finally be aware and cope with the consequences that assessment may bring (Crusan, 2014; Weigle, 2007).

Teachers of English as a foreign language face difficulties when assessing writing in the classroom. The difficulty level may be greater if the written performance is assessed. White (1990, pp.190-195) emphasizes that writing teachers and writing assessors must be aware of the differences between distinct writing programs as individual speech societies have specific assessment purposes. In other words, a fair assessment of learners writing must take into consideration the local practices and purposes of the people which involved in producing a written text. This means that assessment of writing in the classroom is very complex, and that this context is a defining factor in the search for adequate and reliable procedures for assessing writing.

As mentioned above, the difficulties are presented when assessing of EFL writing. According to Pearson (2004, p.) And Hamp-Lyons (2003, pp. 162-189), there are two main difficulties emerge when assessing writing: writer may produce pieces of writing lacking consistency, and in different classrooms, teachers can assess one piece of writing in different ways. In addition, assessment procedures depend on human judgments, which can

be subjective; and therefore, it endangers the validity and reliability of the awarded degrees.

This subjectivity to assessment of writing skill may be subject to extra restrictions when written assessment becomes compulsory in English as a foreign language (EFL) programs. For example, Butler (2009, p.418) sees that EFL Teachers suffer from internal pressure while evaluating their learners' writings, as they try to balance the educational needs of learners and meet the requirements of their educational institution.

Another problem is faced teachers while assessing students' writing is that present language teaching practices do not tend to confirm the importance of assessment adequately. This leads to a loss of communication between class assessment and everyday teaching practice (Stoynoff & Coomb, 2012, pp.122-130; Crusan, 2014; Weigle, 2007). In this sense, Weigle comments saying,

One of the fundamental lessons about assessment is that decisions about assessment should not be left until the end of instruction, but rather should be taken into account from the very beginning, preferably, in the earliest planning stages of a course. (2007, p.196)

On the other hand, there are also issues related to teacher training programs. According to Weigle (ibid.), there is a lack of assessing courses in most undergraduate and graduate programs. This idea supported by Popham (2009, p.5) who explains that "... for these teachers, their only exposure to the concepts and practices of educational assessment might have been a few sessions in their educational psychology classes or, perhaps, a unit in a methods class". This means that the main problems and difficulties of writing practice assessment is the lack of proper trainings which leads to a serious shortage in assessing literacy for teachers.

The idea of assessment literacy embodies the knowledge that teachers possess about assessment theory application and interpretation. As mentioned by Stiggins (1995, p. 240) and Mertler (2003, p.10), this concept of assessment literacy is not only important in education, but also in other areas. However, assessment literacy and the assessment ability of reliability and validity of writing may not be as easy to achieve as some believe. Greater focus should be placed on the interests of training teachers how assess writing skill adequately.

Hence, assessment is a very important process in teaching and learning despite the difficulties faced by teachers. It provides an opportunity for teachers to track learners' progress, express their opinions and measure them, and improve the teaching methods used for teaching writing.

## **2.8. Improving EFL learners' writing**

Many researchers talk about the improvement the writing skill; they try to solve these difficulties that face by third year pupils middle school inside classroom by using some strategies that focus on the causes that influence pupil's writing. Some of these strategies as follow:

### **2.8.1. Using technology to teach writing**

The rapid development of technology has affected learning in many aspects. Learning L2 has changed, and even the way people communicate has changed. It has expanded the communication system and actively redeveloped our community. Computers are full of vast amounts of information, as they can undoubtedly be seen as a way to facilitate a learning process. It can also provide immediate feedback to learners to reinforce their writing ability (Ghahri et al, 2015, p.1495).

Several studies demonstrate that technology can be used to develop learners' writing skills. Writing is a skill that involves many different operations (Harmer, 2004, pp.4-6). He

emphasizes these processes and refers to the three writing processes of planning, editing, and drafting. At the end of these processes, people produce their final draft. In this sense, computers can reduce learners' burden as they can produce high quality writing pieces. They use computers to change, edit, draft, and save their latest drafts (Li & Cumming, 2001; Pennington, 2003).

E-mail use can have a significant impact on improving learners' writing. With email, students learn to respond to their inbound messages with some formal phrases and purposeful learning. They can make distinctions between academic English and general English, and they can perceive how they are used in different situations (Singhal, 1997).

Chang and Swales (1999, pp.148-150) investigate discourse and writing skills at the specific sentence level of non-native advanced learners. They pointed out that the linguistic characteristics at the level of discourse and sentences should be noticed by even advanced learners. It is necessary to direct the attention of learners to these fields using different techniques. One of which is error correction. They complete that clear instructions in advanced academic writing is required. Likewise, Ellis (1990, p.230) supposes that formal teaching in the classroom with an emphasis on linguistic accuracy will motivate the learner to participate in planned discourse and develop the appropriate type of competence.

Consequently, learners may have the opportunity to improve their writing skill by using technology opportunities more easily than their traditional method.

### **2.8.2. Using pictures**

According to Raimes (1983, pp. 27-45), pictures can be a valuable resource that provide a common experience for learners in the classroom and a common base that leads to a variety of language activities. Using images, all learners will immediately need the appropriate vocabulary, expressions, sentence structure, choice of words, and alike to discuss what they are seeing in graphic symbols and their translations. It also provides the



use of common vocabulary and common language forms. In addition, an image can only be used for sentence play exercises, and sentence sequences for writing dialogue boxes; letters; reports; and articles. Finally, the images the teacher uses in the classroom stimulate learners' attention and create a real and tangible world in the classroom. Therefore, it is a valuable resource as he claims,

- a. Shared experience in the classroom,
- b. A need for common language forms to use in the classroom,
- c. A variety of tasks, and
- d. A focus of interest for student (p.28).

### **2.8.3. Techniques in using readings**

As mentioned in the first chapter, reading is a useful tool for improving learners' writing because it is a study of what is written. That is, even if skills are separated, reading is a passive activity while writing is a fruitful activity. Yet, it is complementary and can be developed over time. In this regard, several surveys are conducted to confirm the existence of the relationship between reading and writing. The Results proved that there is a strong relationship between them.

Teachers should be aware that reading can be a useful tool for improving poor writing among their learners. Thus, a short story, news paper, or letters provide shared content in the classroom. Reading can also create an information gap that sets the stage for various communication activities. When the teacher encourages his/her learners to read, they interact with new language, culture, new vocabulary, new ideas, etc. By the same context, Raimes (1983) states, "The more our students read, the more they become familiar with the vocabulary, idioms, sentences patterns, organizational flow, and cultural assumptions of the native speakers of the language" (p.50). This technique includes several activities which are divided into two broad categories: extensive reading and close reading.

Learners can work with either "the text" or "from the text". The text means that learners copy the writer's choice of specific linguistic and logical properties, such as coherence links, punctuation and grammatical rules, and sentence arrangement and organization. Whereas the latter, from the text, means that learners create their own text by summarizing, completing, speculating or interacting. Finally, this technique can help solve learner writing problems if a teacher uses them frequently.

In any state, the two skills go hand in hand, and one cannot work without juggling the second skill. We often read to obtain the information to be included in our writing. However, this ideal path to improve learners writing seems to be neglected among EFL learners.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, we covered some generalities about skilled and struggling writers. After that, we shed light on the nature of these difficulties, and we tried to cover the most important reasons that hinder writing good text, such as writing instructions, the nature of the writing process, lack of motivation and practice, insufficient time, and finally the teacher's feedback. We also touched on some common mistakes committed by learners and their sources in addition to the most important factors affecting the use of L1 in L2 writing, and identifying the difficulties that the teacher faces when assessing the written product of EFL learners. Moreover, from this scope, we concluded with some strategies that could be used to improve EFL Learners' writing.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## Chapter Three: Field work

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## **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to the practical part of this research. It provides a detailed analysis of the collected data followed by a discussion of the results obtained in an attempt the results obtained in an attempt to confirm the research hypotheses. This study deals with the most important difficulties facing students in writing a paragraph. In order to enrich this study with sufficient data, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to middle school teachers of English who are teaching third-year classes. In addition, an interview with the pupils was chosen as another data collection tool for this study in order to obtain more information, in addition to the process of diagnosing and analyzing common errors in written production.

### **3.1. Questionnaire for teachers**

The purpose of using of teachers' questionnaire collection tool is to obtain the different perspectives and attitudes of the third year EFL middle school teachers towards the written production of their pupils.

#### **3.1.1. Description of the teachers' questionnaire**

This questionnaire has been designed on the basis of what is covered in the theoretical part of the current research. The questionnaire is specifically designed for middle school teachers who teach third year classes. This questionnaire is managed by teachers who teach in the same middle school. This questionnaire won the approval of the third year EFL teachers through their responses to the questions and comments, in addition to that they provide explanations about the third year program. The questions in this questionnaire are both closed-ended and open-ended questions that teachers are supposed to provide answers to "yes" or "no", we have follow-up questions that take the form of "please, explain " or " please, state why" or to choose the appropriate answer from different options; or questions are closed questions that are often used in this questionnaire. These

questions allow us to obtain clear and accurate answers. Thus, the clarity feature is given. The teacher questionnaire consists of fourteen (14) questions divided into four sections. Each one is either directly or indirectly related to the research.

### **3.1.2. Administration and aim of the teachers' questionnaire**

As we mentioned earlier, this questionnaire is for middle school teachers who teach English; specifically, those who teach third-year pupils. This questionnaire was distributed hand in hand to middle school teachers. In the end, the questionnaire (Appendix 1, p.136) was complete and clear, and we believe it can be data worthy of our study. The aim of this questionnaire is to use teachers' responses to help us obtain teachers' attitudes toward their pupils' writing and whether some of the difficulties that hinder pupils' writing production can be identified.

### **3.1.3. Analysis of the teachers' questionnaire**

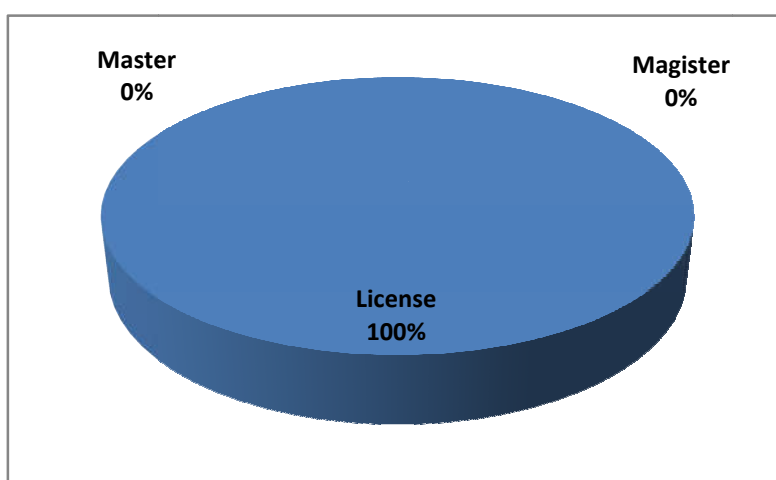
This questionnaire is composed of four sections with total number of fourteen (14) question items of different natures. The analysis of the collected data deals with each section separately. The questionnaire seeks the major difficulties that face pupils in writing and its causes. It starts with a section in which we aim at gathering general information about third year middle school teachers including two questions. The second tackles the writing skill consists seven questions. The third one deals with difficulties of writing with six questions, and the last one intends to figure out the major causes of writing includes consists eight statements questions.

#### **a. Biographical information**

##### **1. Can you determine your educational level?**

**Table 3. 1. Teachers' education qualification**

<b>Educational level</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
License	02	100%
Master	00	00%
Magister	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>100%</b>



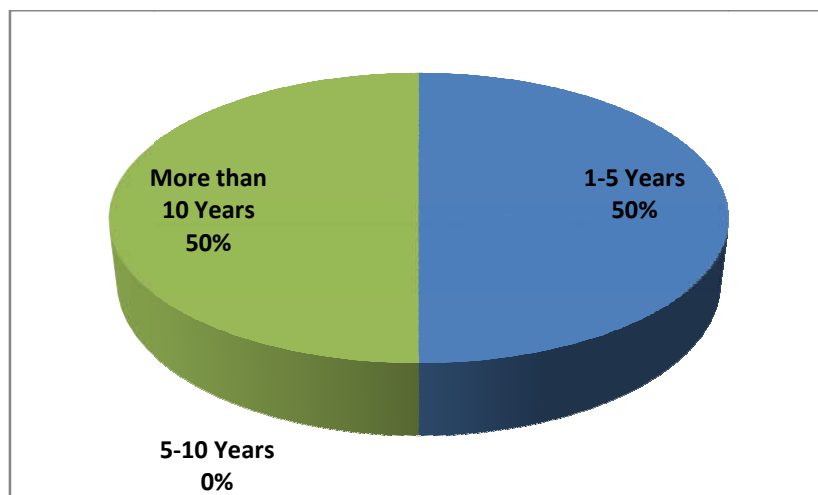
**Graph 3. 1. Teachers' educational qualification**

As shown in the above table, all teachers are at a rate of (100%) and represent teachers with a license degree. None of them have a doctorate or magister's degree.

**2. How long have you been teaching English?**

**Table 3. 2. Teachers' experience**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
1-5 Years	01	50%
5-10 Years	00	00%
More than 10 Years	01	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Graph 3. 2. Teachers' experience**

The above table also shows that there is a percentage of (50%) of teachers who has experience in teaching from one to five years, and (50%) the ratio of the experience of the second teacher ranges more than ten years; which means that there is a difference between teachers between an experienced and a novice in teaching. The latter is useful for us. It helps us collect data from teachers of various experiences.

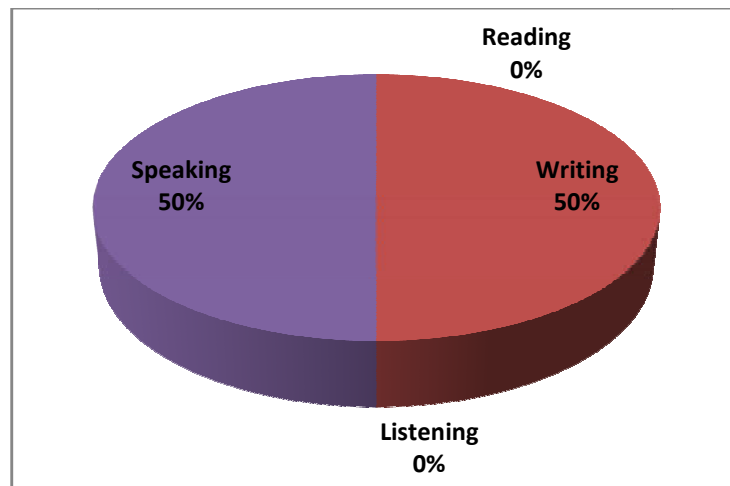
**b. Section one: Writing skill**

**1. What is the most important skill learners need to master?**

**Table 3. 3. The skill that pupils need more to master**

The Skill	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Reading	00	00%
Writing	01	50%
Listening	00	00%
Speaking	01	50%
<b>Total</b>	02	100%





**Graph 3. 3. The skill that pupils need more to master**

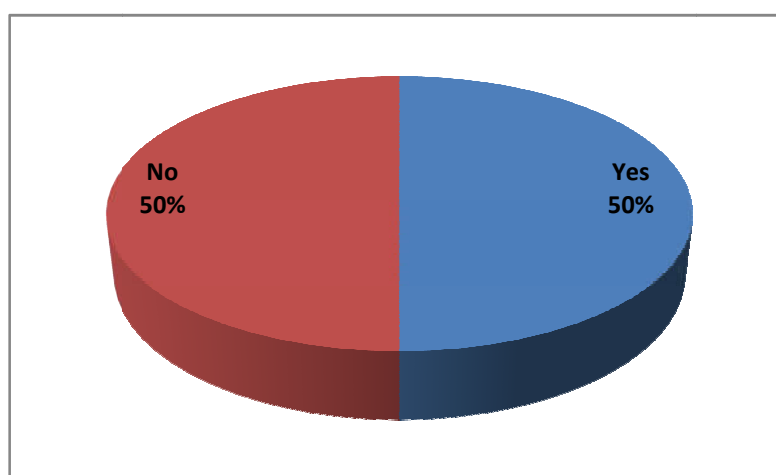
In this question, teachers are asked to determine which language skill (s) is most important and which pupils need to master. Since both teachers have two different points of view, the first teacher (50%) indicates that writing skill is the most important. The importance of writing is that it is a skill through which pupils can express their thoughts and ideas. The second teacher (50%) focuses more on speaking skill rather than other skills. Thus, teachers have different perspectives about the most important skill that must be mastered contributing to the educational success of their pupils.

According to our participants of teachers, they give different points of view. The first teacher justifies that writing is the most important skill that students need to master because it is used to express their ideas derived from their lessons. As for the second teacher, it is clear that the language depends on speaking to deliver a message, and speaking is the origin of the language. The human race begins to speak before any other skill.

**2. Do you think that the third year middle school program of English gives special priority to the writing skill?**

**Table 3. 4. Teachers' attitude towards third year middle school English program**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	01	50%
No	01	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Graph 3. 4. Teachers' attitude towards third year middle school English program**

The above table shows, one of the teachers answered with "yes" that the English language program for the third year average gives special priority to writing skill; however, the answer of the second teacher was unlike the first teacher (50%), where the answer is that the program does not give special priority to writing skill. Thus, there are two different perspectives about the priority of teaching process of writing.

To reinforce their attitude, the first teacher puts the claim that writing should be included in the program because teachers need to be formed whether their pupils can write a short paragraph using simple sentences to express their ideas and thoughts. Then, they are going to pass an official examination, for they must practice writing a paragraph.

The other teacher believes that the problem relates to the learning session as one or two sessions per *month* is not enough to learn writing skill and master its techniques.

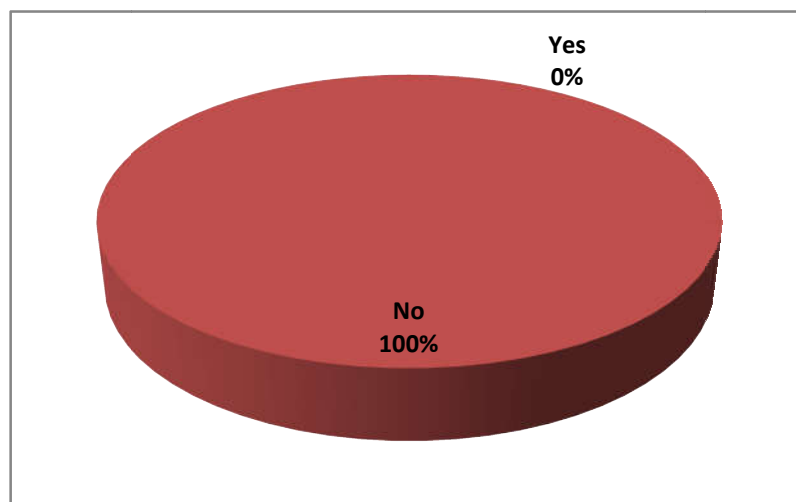
**3. How many teaching hours’ per-day and week are devoted to writing?**

For the question above, regarding the number of daily and weekly teaching hours devoted to writing, both teachers agreed on the same answer. As the time for writing is two hours in each sequence. Surprisingly enough, by the end of each session, pupils are supposed to write only one sentence on the target language.

**4. Do you think that the devoted time to writing is sufficient enough to enable pupils write correctly and accurately?**

**Table 3. 5. Teachers' attitude towards time allotment**

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Yes	00	00%
No	02	100%
<b>Total</b>	02	100%



**Graph 3. 5. Teachers' attitude towards time allotment**

As the table above shows, (100%) of teachers state that teaching hours are not enough to teach writing and get their pupils to write correctly and accurately. This means that the number of hours affects the writing instruction process.

### 5. How do you teach writing?

To teach writing skill, different methods are used: the process and product approach. Their use either separately or in combination depends on teaching conditions, situations and needs. Both teachers follow the same approach in writing. This approach includes four steps: warming up, prewriting, during writing and post writing. Also, they add that one session should be done in groups and other should be done individually.

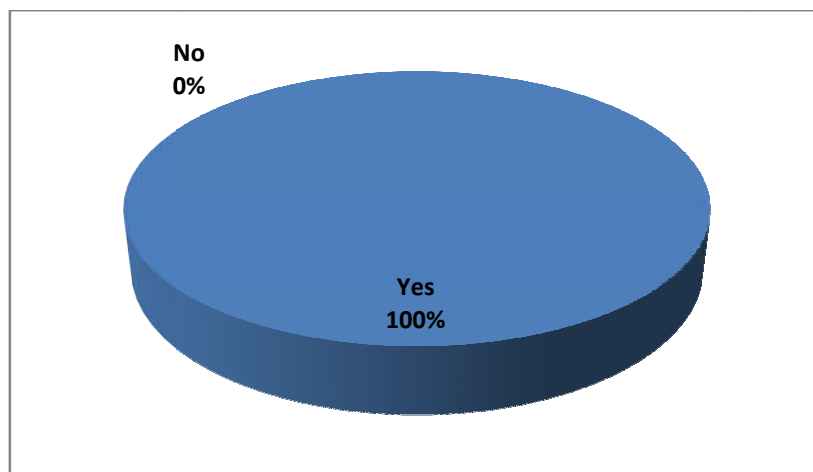
### 6. What do you think are the main aspects of good writing you teach to your pupils?

In this question, they answer that the key aspects of good writing are very important because they give students opportunities and environment to reinvest their resources. Their pupils should realize the importance of good writing in the educational context. In addition, academic writing requires some rules of structure, style, and content aspects of writing, including organization, vocabulary, punctuation, and capitalization. A good piece of writing should be well-organized with a careful word choice and correct language.

### 7. Do you give your pupils opportunities to practice writing inside or outside the classroom?

**Table 3. 6. Opportunities to practice writing**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	02	100%
No	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	02	100%



**Graph3. 6. Opportunities to practice writing**

The above table shows that (100%) of teachers give opportunities to their pupils to practice writing in both environments in order to improve their pupils' writing. Later in this question, teachers have been asked to justify their answers, and their justifications were varied and valuable. For example, the practice allows them to integrate their knowledge, which in turn allows teachers to assess pupils' level of what they have learned; pupils need to have good writing skills to accurately express their knowledge in examinations. This can only be achieved by practice inside and outside classroom.

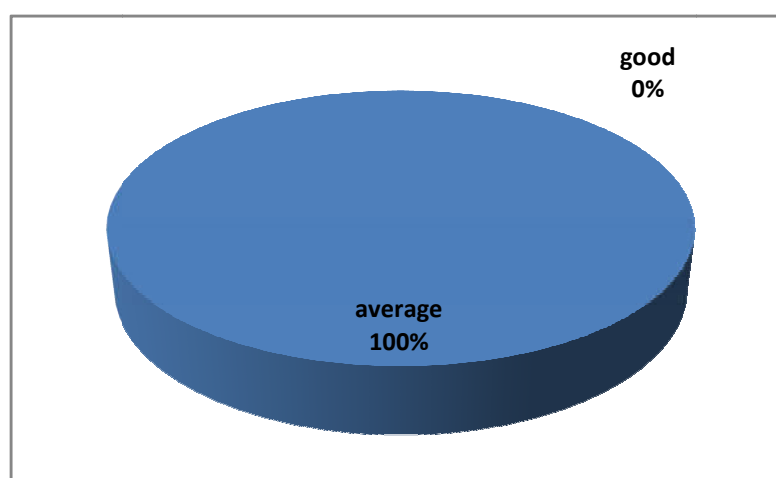
Also, they explain the followed method of practice in inside and outside classroom. Inside the class, they explain the general idea about the piece of writing. Then, they encourage their pupils to express their ideas orally by using cues which are already given by teacher. After this, they write the elicited information using simple sentences to form a meaningful paragraph. Outside the class, they ask pupils to search about a given subject using the "Internet" or "books". Next, they follow the usual steps that they have done in the class. This further confirms that the practice has a tremendous impact on pupils' achievement and educational success.

**c. Section two: Writing difficulties of middle school pupils**

**1. How do you rate the level of your pupils in writing skill?**

**Table 3. 7. Teachers' attitude towards their pupils' level in writing skill**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Average	02	100%
Good	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Graph3. 7. Teachers' attitude towards their pupils' level writing skill**

The above table shows that all teachers consider pupils' writing skill to be average (100%), while none of the teachers consider that pupils' writing skill is good. As they have justified, the teachers realize consciously that their pupils suffer from insufficient written skills. Additionally, they face serious difficulties in their writing skills, and this may be because the program is not completely covered (as one teacher emphasized), or it may be because pupils cannot convey their message well through writing, or teachers lack the teaching experience. One of teachers adds that when pupils have difficulties in writing; this undoubtedly results into poor production and poor writing skills.

## 2. What type of errors do your pupils make when composing?

Based on the above question, teachers state that their pupils are making many errors in written production. These errors relate to the structure of the language, such as grammatical errors, spelling, punctuation marks, capitalization and lack of vocabulary. These errors have serious effects on the written production of pupils.

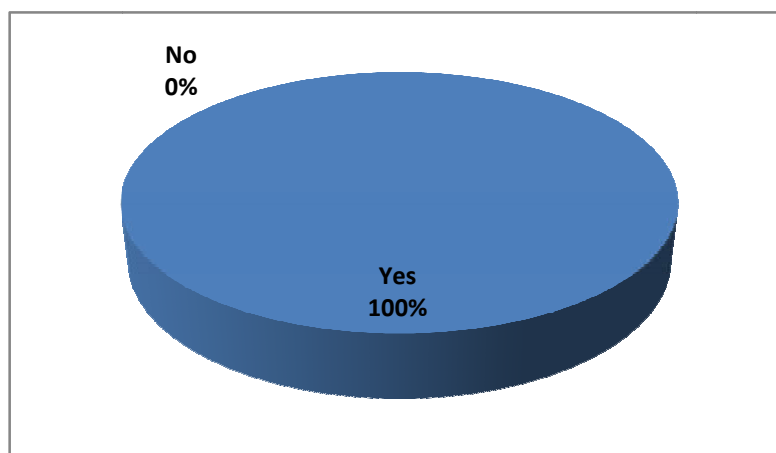
## 3. How do you correct their errors?

According to teachers' answer the correction takes two stages. First, in the exam paper, they correct their errors by pointing them and making signs to understand the type of errors. Second, in the correction class, teachers write most common mistakes on the board or write the entire paragraph with its errors. Then, they try to correct them together. It has been noted that teachers do not correct the errors of all pupils.

## 4. Do they pay attention and benefit from the provided feedback?

**Table3. 8. Pupils' attitudes towards teachers' provided feedback**

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Yes	02	100%
No	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	02	100%



**Graph3. 8. Pupils' attitude towards their teachers' provided feedback**

As the above table illustrates, that (100%) of the teachers stated that the most of their pupils take the provided feedback in their considerations to ameliorate their writing.

They explain the fact that some of pupils try to do not repeat again the corrected errors in the next piece of writing. So, they learn by heart how to spell words correctly, and they try to imitate the main steps of writing the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. However, other pupils are careless about their errors. They do not benefit from the provided feedback.

### **5. Do your pupils have difficulties in writing?**

The teachers stated that most of their pupils have difficulties when writing in English by answering, " Yes, most of them". These difficulties prevent getting a good and correct paragraph during written examinations. This reality is closely related to what was done in the theoretical part (See page 40), and that is what has been stated by both Grabe and Kaplan (1996, p. 87). They mention that perhaps half of the world's population does not know how to write properly and effectively. This means that not only our pupils suffer from doing this properly, but all people may be even at L1. These findings reinforce the view that pupils' low level of writing skills is the result of their writing difficulties.

### **6. Do they use the writing stages (pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing) to write?**

From this question, teachers answer has been "yes, most of them". They add that their pupils use these stages only in lesson session. They ignore them in the examinations. Only the excellent pupils respect them.

According to our participants of teachers, they began with the presentation of how to introduce lesson of writing. First, they explain the general idea about the topic. Then, they ask them to form groups and try to express their needed ideas in each steps using a limited time for each step. They added that they help them to be aware of writing stages, such as



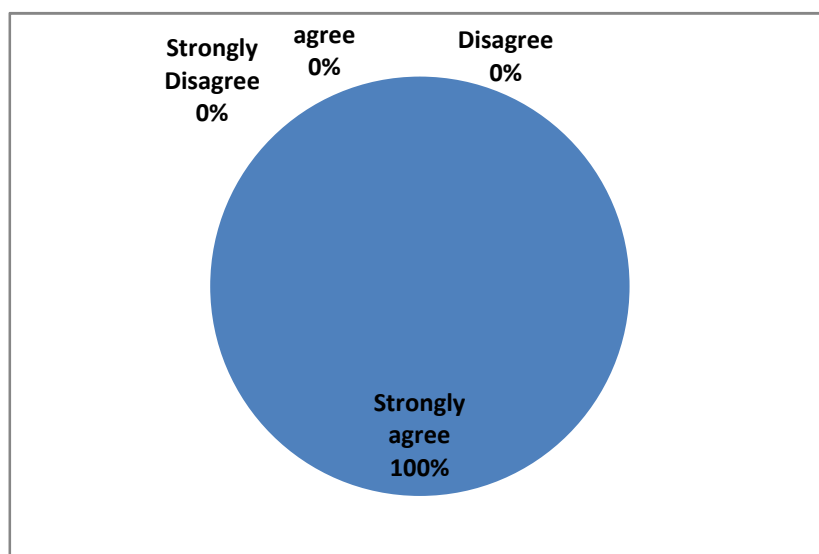
pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing, and they insist on the pupils to respect these stages in order to compose an accurate paragraph and avoid making in errors.

**d. Section Three: Causes of middle school pupils' writing difficulties**

**Statement 01:** The inadequate teaching approach of writing skill in the middle school

**Table3. 9. The use of inadequate writing approach in the classroom**

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	02	100%
Agree	00	00%
Disagree	00	00%
Strongly Disagree	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	02	100%



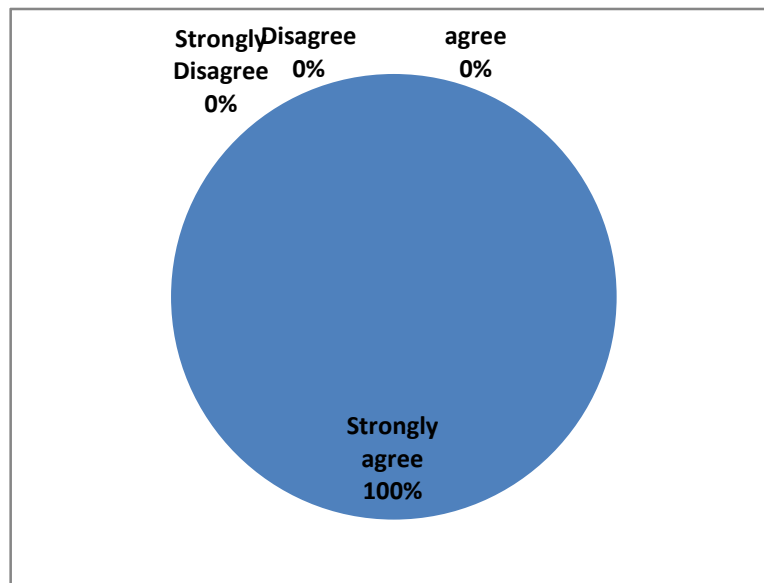
**Graph3. 9. The use of inadequate writing approach in the classroom**

From the above table, it is clear that all teachers (100%) strongly agree that the current teaching approach is inappropriate for pupils to write accurately and correctly. The other percentages were (00%) for each of agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

**Statement 02:** Teachers' corrective feedback plays a crucial role in pupils writing

**Table3. 10. The Importance of teachers' corrective feedback**

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	02	100%
Agree	00	00%
Disagree	00	00%
Strongly Disagree	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>100%</b>



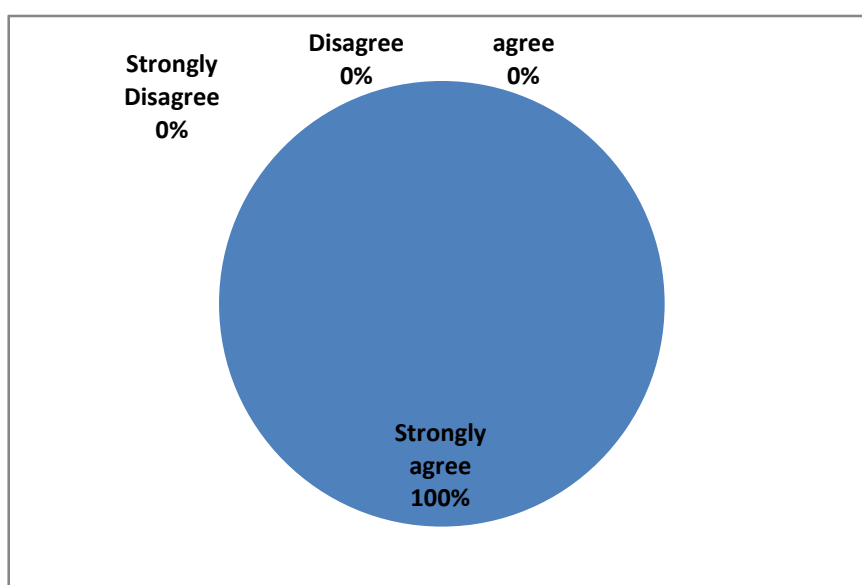
**Graph3. 10. The importance of teachers' corrective feedback**

Statistically, the strongly agree is (100%) that corrective feedback plays an important role in pupils' writing. (00%) agree, (00%) disagree and (00%) strongly disagree about the statement number two.

**Statement 03:** The huge- numbered class affects the pupils' writing performance

**Table 3. 11. The impact of huge-numbered class on pupils performance**

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	02	100%
Agree	00	00%
Disagree	00	00%
Strongly Disagree	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	02	100%



**Graph 3. 11. The impact of huge-numbered class on pupils' performance**

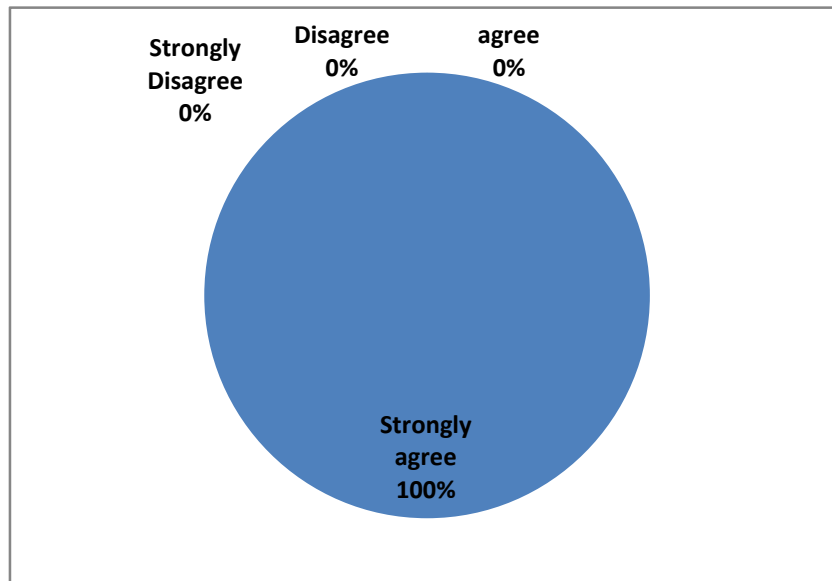
The table shows that (100%) of teachers strongly agree that the out- number of pupils affect their writing performance. While the rate of agree, disagree, and strongly disagree is equal to (00%).

**Statement 04:** Lack of interest and willingness to write in English.

**Table 3. 12. Pupils unwillingness to write in English**

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	02	100%
Agree	00	00%
Disagree	00	00%

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	02	100%



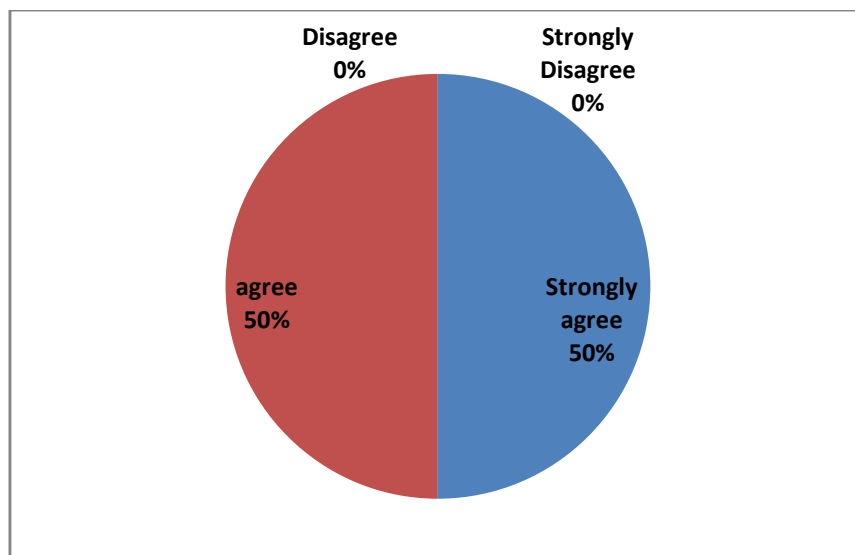
**Graph 3. 12. Pupils' unwillingness to write in English**

The table shows that (100%) of teachers strongly agree that their pupils are not interested in and do not wish to write. (00%) agree, (00%) disagree, and (00%) strongly disagree about the statement number four.

**Statement 05:** The mother language (Arabic) has an impact on writing in English

**Table 3. 13. The interference of mother language on writing in English**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	01	50%
<b>Agree</b>	01	50%
<b>Disagree</b>	00	00%
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	02	100%



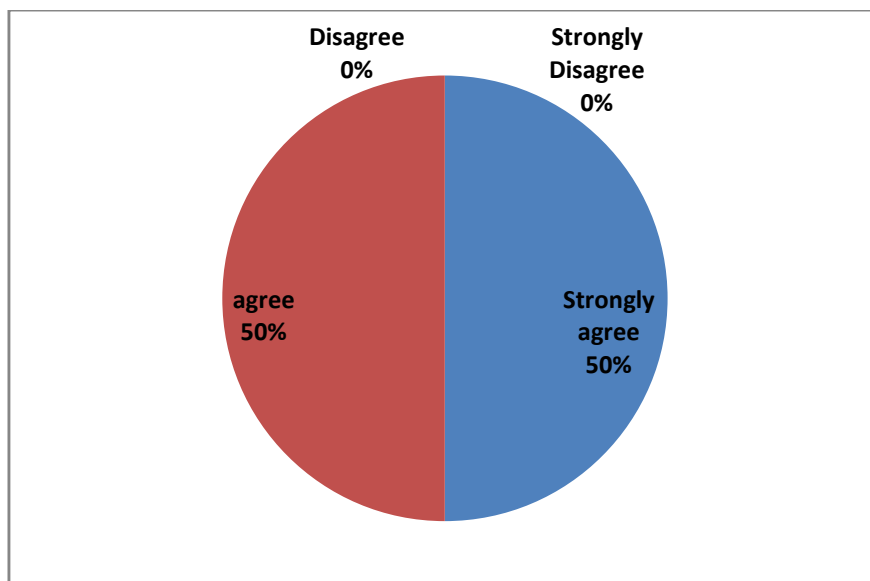
**Graph 3. 13. The interference of mother language on writing in English**

It appears from the table that the answer to statement five is divided into (50%) strongly agree and (50%) agree. 00%) agree, (00%) disagree, and (00%) strongly disagree about the statement number five. The teachers' summary of the statement number five leads us to the conclusion that the mother tongue has an effect on the English language.

**Statement 06:** Pupils do not read enough

**Table 3. 14. Pupils' lack of reading**

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	01	50%
Agree	01	50%
Disagree	00	00%
Strongly Disagree	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	02	100%



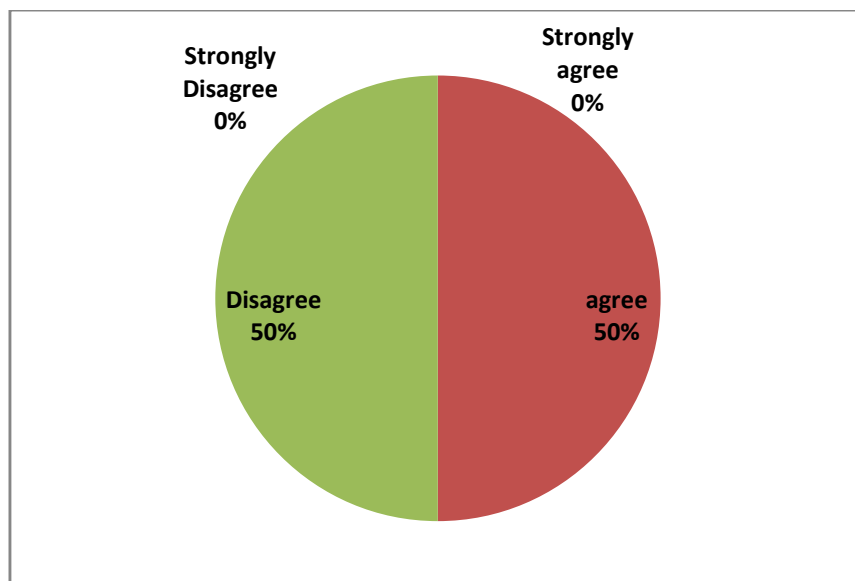
**Graph 3. 14. Pupils' lack of reading**

Through the table, it is clear that the answer to statement six is distributed in the following division: (50%) strongly agree and (50%) agree that their pupils do not practice reading sufficiently. (00%) disagree and (00%) strongly disagree. It means that the teachers positively acknowledged (100%) that their pupils do not read enough.

**Statement 07:** The lack of writing practices in the teaching curriculum

**Table 3. 15. Insufficient writing practices in the third year English curriculum**

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	00	00%
Agree	01	50%
Disagree	01	50%
Strongly Disagree	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>100%</b>



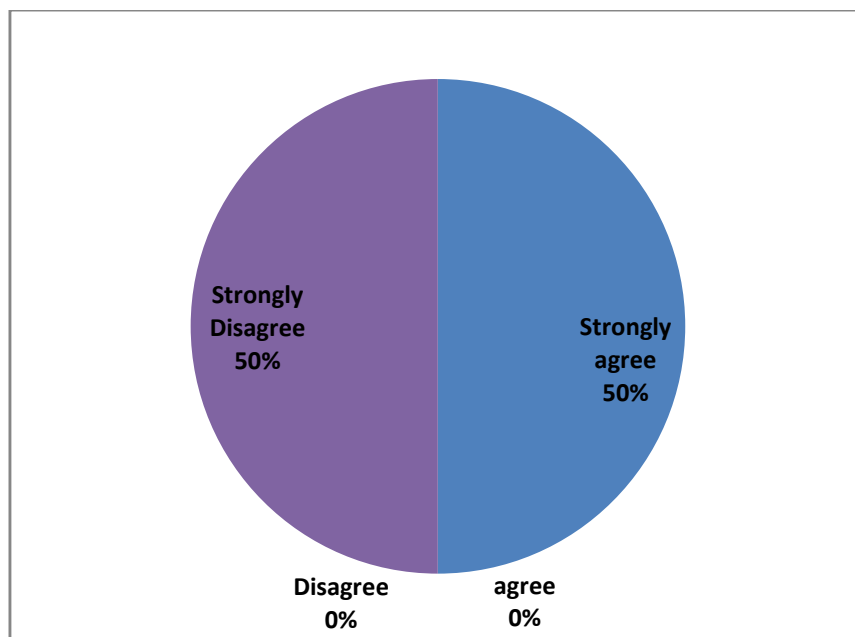
**Graph 3. 15. Insufficient writing practices in the third year English curriculum.**

The above table indicates that there are two opposite answers. One teacher (50%) agrees with the lack of practice, but the other teacher (50%) disagrees. (00%) strongly agree and (00%) strongly disagree about the statement seven.

**Statement 08:** Teacher is a factor of demotivation

**Table 3. 16. Teachers as a demotivating factor**

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	01	50%
Agree	00	00%
Disagree	00	00%
Strongly Disagree	01	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>100%</b>



***Graph 3. 16. Teachers as a demotivating factor***

The purpose of this statement is to know how teachers think about their role in the writing class. The results obtained from the collected responses have revealed that (50%) strongly agree that the teacher is a factor of demotivation and (50%) strongly disagree. (00%) agree and (00%) disagree about the statement eight.

**Please, if there are other causes that prevent your pupils from writing accurately?**

This question aims at giving informants the freedom to add any information that might enhance and serve our investigation. All teachers (02) share the same ideas about why writing skill is poor. Hence, they states that writing is necessary for teaching, and ignoring it means ignoring its contribution to developing other skills.

They also add other causes which may hinder pupils to write skillfully including the difficulty of the topic, the allotted time, lack of information about the topic, the topic does not suit the age and the interest of pupils.

**3.1.4. Discussion of the findings**

From the analysis of the questions of the questionnaire for teachers, it appears clear that this administrated questionnaire provides useful information to our study. These



results suggest a weak level of writing among Third Year Middle School Pupils. Regarding the most important skill to be mastered, each teacher has different perspective. According to them, the mastery of any language skill means pupils have to be familiar with all its aspects. They also do not deny the importance and role of writing in the learning process. Teachers acknowledge that the third year middle school program does not give preference to this skill, and that is evident in the time allotted for lesson.

Teachers are giving their pupils opportunities to write inside and outside the classroom but are dissatisfied with the level of their pupils in writing. They assume this low level due to lack of interests and desires to write and read. According to justifications offered by those teachers, their pupils do not read enough because reading is used to develop writing and enable pupils to write correctly and accurately.

Teachers use the process approach to teaching writing. This approach is based on reading, but reading alone does not trust pupils to write. However, their pupils are failing in their writing that means that their pupils have problems with writing. According to teachers' answers, these difficulties include grammatical rules, punctuation marks, capitalization and spelling, which make them commit many written errors and spelling errors prevent obtaining a correct and accurate text. That's why; they should be aware for this problem and try to solve them immediately following intensive remedial work. As they attribute these difficulties to many reasons, including interference of the mother tongue in the writing system of English, lack of consistent readings, overcrowded classrooms, lack of trainings. As a result of these, pupils perform poorly in writing.

### **3.2. Pupils' interview**

The second tool for collecting data in the current investigation is the interview. The latter has been conducted immediately after passing the second English examination. The

interviewees are nine (n = 9) third year EFL pupils studying at Ibn khaldoune Middle School in the Willaya of Biskra, Algeria.

### **3.2.1. Audio recording interview**

We chose the tape recording interview for its distinguished features: "It preserves actual language as it is naturalistic with objective record" (Nunan, 1992, p. 153). The contributions of the interviewees are recorded because it enables the researcher to transcribe and analyze the data after the event. Indeed, in the current research, we confirmed a audio recording interview with note-taking in order to facilitate the transcription of the recorded material. In other words, we rely on the use of the Smartphone voice recorder to record the pupils' answers.

### **3.2.2. Description of the interview**

As mentioned above, our interview with the third year EFL middle school pupils (studying at Ibn khaldoune middle school) by using both forms; tape-recording and note taking in a form of prose. The interview (See appendix 2, page 136) contains ten (n=10) questions items whose objective is to fill the gaps of the previous tool which probably may not tackled. Moreover, the use of interview would add details to our study. We use the symbol (Px) that refers to each person interviewed.

We started asking the interview questions after pupils have taken their English examination. We also have reminded the interviewees of the purpose of the study.

### **3.2.3. Analysis and interpretation of the interview' results**

The current section deals with the analysis of the interview of pupils. The interview with nine (09) third year EFL middle school pupils inside the school; directly after the second English exam on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at eighth'oclock .it includes ten (10) questions (see appendix 2 , p.). This interview is designed to gather information about major difficulties

in writing and its causes from pupils that will be analyzed, interpreted, and then used to reinforce our study.

**Question 01: Do you write a paragraph?**

*P<sub>1</sub>: Yes, I write a paragraph*

*P<sub>2</sub>: yes, I write a whole paragraph*

*P<sub>3</sub>: I write a paragraph*

*P<sub>4</sub>: No, I do not write a paragraph.*

*P<sub>5</sub>: I write a short paragraph*

*P<sub>6</sub>: Yes, I write a paragraph but it is incomplete.*

*P<sub>7</sub>: Yes, I write a paragraph containing five lines*

*P<sub>8</sub>: yes, I write three lines.*

*P<sub>9</sub>: I write a four-line scattered paragraph.*

Of the nine pupils, eight pupils have written a paragraph of a different size between a whole paragraphs and three or five lines. As for the ninth pupil, he does not write any word. Simply because he faces some difficulties to edit a paragraph.

**Question 02: Why do not you write anything in the paragraph?**

*Pupil 4: because I do not know. Because I do not know anything in English, for example, the meanings of some words, how to use them in useful sentences, in addition to that I do not know what the paragraph talks about. I only know the words used as good morning, good evening, thank you. I do not understand the teacher when he presents the lesson. The English language is very difficult, I am trying to understand it but I could not since the first year.*

Based on what this pupil says that he faces many difficulties that hinder his writing. The evidence for this is that he does not write any word in the passage although the teacher helps them by giving the basic ideas. This pupil cannot develop and connect sentences

because he does not understand the rules of the English language. He also cannot understand the question because understanding the question is half the answer. He suffers from how the sentences are related, the arrangement and development of sentences, the lack of vocabulary, tenses, etc. He only knows some daily used vocabularies only.

**Question 03: Do you face some difficulties while composing a paragraph? What are they?**

*P<sub>1</sub>: I understand the ideas, but when linking I find it difficult.*

*P<sub>2</sub>: No difficulty, I write a paragraph with new information. But some colleagues have difficulties.*

*P<sub>3</sub>: Sometimes, depending on the topic.*

*P<sub>4</sub>: I cannot, because I do not know the meaning of words, and I do not even speak English.*

*P<sub>5</sub>: I can't, I saw the text and imitated it.*

*P<sub>6</sub>: The difficulty I face is how to tie sentences.*

*P<sub>7</sub>: There is difficulty, because I do not know how to write a paragraph*

*P<sub>8</sub>: There is difficulty, because I do not know how to write a paragraph and how to organize connect the ideas, I do not understand anything.*

*P<sub>9</sub>: There is difficulty, in understanding words and how to link sentences.*

All those interviewed agree that they face some difficulties while writing. These difficulties include using grammatical rules, choice of words, linking ideas together, organizing the text, difficulty understanding the topic, and they are ignorant of the correct way of writing a paragraph. However, as for the pupil two who has been interviewed, he has a neutral attitude towards this question as he/she applies all the steps of writing a paragraph and he/she mastering the grammar of the language, and does not deny the existence of difficulties in writing a text.

**Question 04: Do you make an outline or mind map before you start writing to generate ideas?**

Our objective behind this question is to explore whether or not the interviewed third year middle school pupils of English as foreign language follow and use the stages of writing.

*P<sub>1</sub>: Everything I write is mixed.*

*P<sub>2</sub>: I use the **rough paper**, try to **organize** and coordinate my ideas, and then write in the answer sheet.*

*P<sub>3</sub>: Yes, I use a **mind map** in the rough paper, write ideas and spend actions, write down everything related to the topic.*

*P<sub>4</sub>: What do you mean by outline, I do not put a writing plan, because the first time I know that when writing a paragraph, a plan can be drawn up.*

*P<sub>5</sub>: What do you mean by outline or mind map, I do not put a writing plan, because I do not know it.*

*P<sub>6</sub>: I do not make any mind plans, the teacher did not talk about it so write directly.*

*P<sub>7</sub>: I do not make any out line, write directly.*

*P<sub>8</sub>: I do not make any plan, start writing directly on the answer sheet, and write down what I understand.*

*P<sub>9</sub>: I do not make any plans, I do not know it.*

The results confirmed that most pupils are unaware of a paragraph writing stages. Simply, it means that teachers have given no idea how to write a good paragraph, as they write directly on the answer sheet. But there are two pupils (2 and 3) who use the rough paper and the mind map to generate, develop, and organize ideas, then they write their correct written text in the answer sheet.

**Question 05: Do you face a problem to organize your ideas while writing a paragraph?**

Our aim behind this question in this investigation is to find the problems that faced pupils in organizing ideas.

*P<sub>1</sub>: If I use the rough paper, I can organize my thoughts.*

*P<sub>2</sub>: Sometimes when the words are new to me, I find it difficult, because we did not use them in the lesson, they break down the writing, but we try to understand them.*

*P<sub>3</sub>: Sometimes I find it difficult to organize what I wrote in the draft paper, as I find it difficult to link sentences.*

*P<sub>4</sub>: I find it difficult to understand the questions, the question so that I can read it, I do not understand it.*

*P<sub>5</sub>: I find it difficult to form and link sentences.*

*P<sub>6</sub>: I have a problem organizing ideas. For example, if the teacher gives us information, I write a paragraph based on that information.*

*P<sub>7</sub>: I have a problem with pronouns, verbs, words, for example, when teacher gives us information, I write a paragraph and use the ideas of the exercise.*

*P<sub>8</sub>: I don't understand the exercise, I don't have the words to form sentences, and even the thoughts I don't have. For example, if the teacher gives us information, I write a paragraph using the exercise ideas.*

*P<sub>9</sub>: I have a difficulty with ideas, for example, when the teacher gives us information, I will write a paragraph using the exercise ideas because they are organized ideas that I can write.*

The results of this question confirmed that most pupils face a problem while organizing ideas for a paragraph. This problem varies from one pupil to another, depending on his/her ability to understand ideas. Some pupils also add that organizing ideas depends

on the type of question. That is, if the main ideas of the paragraph presented in an organized way, it makes it easier for them to write. However, there are some pupils who can organize their ideas if they use the attempts paper first ( read the answer of pupil 1).

**Question 06: What types of errors do you make it in writing paragraph?**

The following question aims to discover the nature of errors pupils make while composing.

*P<sub>1</sub>: I make errors related to spelling and tenses, especially continues and perfect tense.*

*P<sub>2</sub>: My spelling errors in the first place because the way we speak, we write?*

*P<sub>3</sub>: My spelling errors in the first place, while writing, I forget some letters. For example:*

*The word "scientist" is written "sientist".*

*P<sub>4</sub>: My errors are many because I write everything even words and ideas incomprehensible. I never understand English.*

*P<sub>5</sub>: My errors are many, such as as we say, we write.*

*P<sub>6</sub>: Spelling errors because I write what I say.*

*P<sub>7</sub>: I make various errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation ... I mix ideas...no relation between them.....sometimes my text has no sense.... Ect.*

*P<sub>8</sub>: Make various errors, for example grammar, spelling, punctuation.*

*P<sub>9</sub>: I make a variety of errors because I only write to fill out the paper.*

From the pupils 'replies, we can deduce that most of them commit errors in grammatical rules, spelling, punctuation and capitalization. In addition, some pupils write only to fill out the paper, and they do not enjoy writing. The majority have also indicated that they frequently use "text speak style" (i.e., speaking and writing). Thus, they fail to compose a correct and a good paragraph.

**Question 07: Can you write a correct sentence?**

The question item seeks to check if the pupils are able to write a correct sentence since sentences are the bases of a paragraph.

*P<sub>1</sub>: I write a sentence, sometimes it is correct and sometimes the error occurs in one letter or two, if the pronunciation of words is similar to writing, I will answer it correctly, but if we do not know the pronunciation it will be wrong.*

*P<sub>2</sub>: I can and cannot. When verbs and words are new, I find it difficult.*

*P<sub>3</sub>: I write a correct sentence because the sentence consists of a subject, a verb, and an object.*

*P<sub>4</sub>: I cannot write a correct sentence. English is difficult.*

*P<sub>5</sub>: I cannot write a correct sentence, when the teacher gives us an exercise regarding the arrangement of sentences, I know how to answer, but if it is an exercise related to forming sentences, I cannot.*

*P<sub>6</sub>: I cannot.*

*P<sub>7</sub>: I cannot write a correct sentence, sometimes I write a simple sentence with errors.*

*P<sub>8</sub>: I cannot write a correct sentence even if it is simple. My paragraph is full of errors.*

*P<sub>9</sub>: I cannot write a correct and complete sentence, even if it is simple. I have a problem with the letters.*

Out of the pupils' responses, most of them cannot write a correct and complete sentence. They commit errors in arranging sentence items or some words. However, there is only one interviewee (read the answer of pupil 3) who can write a correct sentence since he/she gave the correct arrangement of the elements of a sentence. It means that his/her implementation of grammar rules is correct.

#### **Question 08: Do you know how to conjugate the verbs in a specific tense?**

The aim of this question is to find out if the pupils master the various tenses of English language correctly, or not.



*P<sub>1</sub>: I know; I can conjugate verbs at a specific tense.*

*P<sub>2</sub>: I know how to conjugate verbs in simple and compound tense.*

*P<sub>3</sub>: Yes, I can conjugate simple and complex verbs, for example, the past continuous. The rule is: to be (past) + stem + ing*

*P<sub>4</sub>: I cannot conjugate simple and complex verbs. When the teacher is explaining, I don't understand anything.*

*P<sub>5</sub>: Conjugation of verbs, sometimes.*

*P<sub>6</sub>: I conjugate when tense is as simple as the simple past, the correct verb is added "ed", and the irregular verb changes.*

*P<sub>7</sub>: I don't know how to conjugate verbs because I always confuse the correct verb with the irregular verb.*

*P<sub>8</sub>: I don't know the conjugation of verbs. I know only simple tense.*

*P<sub>9</sub>: I do not know the conjugation of verbs. I only know the past tense by adding "ed" to the end of verb.*

Out of nine pupils, four pupils (P<sub>1</sub>- P<sub>2</sub>- P<sub>3</sub>- P<sub>6</sub>) approximately give the same answers. They have ability to conjugate verbs in both simple and compound tense, but the rest have difficulty in conjugating verbs. Some of them master the conjugation of the verb in present simple or past simple, or both by adding "ed" at the end of the verb, but others are not good at it because they do not differentiate between regular and irregular verbs.

**Question 09: Are grammar, punctuation, spelling and capitalization the problems in your writing?**

As for this question, one of the main concerns in this investigation is knowing the problems that impede our third year middle school pupils' writing.

*P<sub>1</sub>: I rely on them a lot when writing like the Arabic language, except for the capital letter.*

*I have a problem that I use only once - in the title - and sometimes I do not use it at all.*

*P<sub>2</sub>: I care more about them because they make the paragraph correct.*

*P<sub>3</sub>: I have a problem with punctuation and spelling rules. The capital letter and the point I have no problem with it.*

*P<sub>4</sub>: I have problems with all of them.*

*P<sub>5</sub>: As I use them in Arabic, I might use them if they give me an example of a paragraph and write a similar one.*

*P<sub>6</sub>: I cannot understand them; I understand some, and others do not.*

*P<sub>7</sub>: I cannot understand. I cannot understand the way they must be used. I put them randomly.*

*P<sub>8</sub>: They are all a problem; I don't know how to employ them in the paragraph.*

*P<sub>9</sub>: They are all a problem; I don't know how to apply them in the paragraph.*

It is accepted that all pupils have problems with their writing, as these problems differ from one student to another. In addition, both (pupils 1 and 2) pointed out that language aspects are necessary for writing; they take care for them. The third pupil has a problem with punctuation marks and spelling, except for the capital letter and period. The fifth pupil uses the method of comparison between the mother language and the English language. This pupil employs it as in the Arabic language; thus, this s/he produce incorrect paragraph. As for the remaining pupils, they have problems with all aspects of the language; sometimes they write a paragraph without punctuation and capitalization in addition to ignoring other aspects, such as organization ideas, the order of words, using grammar rules.

**Question 10 : What do you think are the causes of your paragraph writing difficulties?**

Our objective behind this question is to explore the main reasons that hinder third year middle school pupils' writing.

*P<sub>1</sub>: It is possible to have less focus, so that I have time to write an integrated paragraph, but if the time is fixed, for example in the test or exam, it is not correct because I leave it the last thing. Time and concentration are very important.*

*P<sub>2</sub>: When I want to link the sentences, I have difficulty. I write a correct paragraph and take the full mark. My problem is to change the teacher because the first teacher gives an idea and the second teacher gives a different idea; this mixes my information, and I cannot know what method or technique to follow and employ.*

*P<sub>3</sub>: Lack of concentration. Sometimes I do not concentrate*

*P<sub>4</sub>: Because I do not understand.*

*P<sub>5</sub>: Non-revision and attention. In the session, I understand everything, but during examinations, I cannot answer.*

*P<sub>6</sub>: Lack of concentration and revision because I do not revise my lessons at home.*

*P<sub>7</sub>: Lack of interests because I do not revise my lessons at home.*

*P<sub>8</sub>: Lack of interests because I do not revise my lessons at home.*

*P<sub>9</sub>: I do not understand because I do not revise my lessons at home.*

Through the above responses, the answers of all pupils confirm that there are reasons for these difficulties. The answers of all pupils confirm that there are reasons for these difficulties. The majority of the pupils state the following reasons: insufficient time, lack of practice, lack of concentration, preparation, and lastly revision. As for the second pupil, the reason for his writing difficulties is the change of teachers from time to time, as this greatly affects his writing style because teacher has his/her own teaching method and own way of presenting and explaining and the information provided. It means that the teacher is a reason of demotivation and poor level in the writing skill, according to this pupil.

### **3.2.4. Discussion of the results**

By analyzing the data collected from the pupils' interview, we obtained valuable answers that have been found satisfactory to the pupils during the writing process in the English language. This is due to their failure to follow the correct approach to writing as they write in a random way without setting a mental map to generate ideas and develop the general idea. First of all, this is evidence that the majority of pupils face difficulties while writing that prevent them from obtaining correct and accurate written text, and this is embodied in their inability to link sentences. These pupils find it difficult utilize the basic rules of language, such as the grammar rules (conjugation and structures), as these rules are responsible for giving the text the characteristic of unity and coherence. In addition, they have a big problem in writing a correct sentence and conjugating verbs. They are not able to distinguish between the categories of verbs (regular and irregular verbs). The lack of mastery of the principles of the language, such as the use of prepositions and articles, punctuation, capitalization and spelling, makes the interviewed pupils write in a wrong way, for they committed many errors. They also add that these difficulties have multiple causes, including lack of concentration, lack of revision and practice in writing, the given time for writing. Another reason has been added shows that the teacher might be a source of demotivation while correcting their written paragraph. Thus, the pupils achieve low mark in written expression.

### **3.3. Corpus analysis (analysis of written text)**

The use of this tool aims at investigating the types and frequency of writing errors committed by ninety-four pupils (49 female and 45 male pupils) who are studying at Ibn Khaldoune middle school about their written paragraphs from the second semester examination papers.

Based on the literature reviewed in the second chapter, we decided to include in the analysis of errors in the pupils' paragraphs the following categories and subcategories: grammatical (prepositions, articles, singular/plural, pronouns, verb agreement, verb tenses, and irregular verbs) and syntax (Sentence structure, Fragments, and word order), lexical (word choice), and mechanics (punctuation, capitalization and spelling).

### 3.3.1. Frequency of writing errors committed by the pupils

This section presents and discusses the obtained results from the pupils' exam sheets. First, pupils' errors are categorized, then all errors are identified with illustrative examples, and lastly the errors of learners accompany the correct form (s).

**Table 3. 17. Frequency of writing errors committed by 3<sup>rd</sup> EFL pupils at Ibn Khaldoune middle school in Tolga, Biskra**

Type of error		Frequency of the errors		Percentage (%)	
<b>Grammar</b>	Use of articles	114	<b>461</b>	10.81 %	<b>43.70 %</b>
	Use of prepositions	160		15.17 %	
	Singular/plural	00		00 %	
	Pronouns	45		04.26 %	
	Subject/verb agreement	52		4.93 %	
	Verb tense	88		08.34 %	
	Irregular verbs	02		0.19%	
<b>Syntax</b>	Sentence structure	131	<b>218</b>	12.42 %	<b>20.66 %</b>
	Fragments	59		05.59 %	
	Word order	28		02.65 %	
<b>Lexis</b>	Word choice	45	<b>45</b>	04.27 %	<b>4.27 %</b>
<b>Mechanics</b>	Capitalization	151	<b>331</b>	14.31 %	<b>31.37 %</b>
	Punctuation	128		12.13 %	
	Spelling	52		04.93 %	
<b>Total</b>		<b>1055</b>		<b>100%</b>	

As it is demonstrated in this Table, after analyzing the third year middle school pupils writing production, we find that most of them make several errors in the grammatical level (43.70%), the mechanical level (31.37%), then syntactical level (20.66%), and the last is the lexical level (4.27 %). Herein, the pupils' answers obtained out of the conducted interview are consistent with our analysis of their written paragraphs particularly the nature of errors. This means that pupils answered correctly and honestly to question (09) in the interview (Are grammar, punctuation, spelling and capitalization the problems in your writing?). Below we show some pupils' errors as well as the identification and correction of these errors.

### **3.3.2. Discussion and results**

This analysis displays the results intend to validate the proposed research hypotheses and offer answers to the overall research questions.

#### **1. Grammatical errors**

Grammatical errors are about 43.70 %. Pupils make errors when writing English paragraphs, where most errors are at the level of prepositions followed by articles.

**a. Articles:** article is a word used to give information about the noun. There are three types of them in the English language: **a**, **an** and **the**. However, there are four choices to make since sometimes an article is not required. Native speakers use the articles correctly without any problem. For Foreign English language learners, these small words are a source of many problems because their correct use is very complex. This study shows that most pupils face difficulties in using the articles correctly due to their neglect of the rules. The table below gives some examples.

**Table 3. 18. Sample of incorrect use of English articles (a, an, and the)**

<b>Error classification</b>	<b>Error identification</b>	<b>Error correction</b>
<b>Article</b>	1. Belgacem Haba is very famous scientist	Belgacem Haba is <b>a</b> very famous scientist
	2-He was born on▼ 5 <sup>th</sup> February 1957.	He was born on <b>the</b> 5 <sup>th</sup> February 1957.
	3. On <b>the</b> February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957.	On February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957.
	4. Belgacem Haba is <b>an</b> famous Algerian scientist	Belgacem Haba is <b>a</b> famous Algerian scientist.
	5. Belgacem Haba is <b>a</b> Algerian scientist	Belgacem Haba is <b>an</b> Algerian scientist.

There are some guidelines for using articles in the English language related to the type of article definite or indefinite article, and knowledge of these guidelines is essential for EFL middle school pupils. In this study, most of the paragraphs' errors can be attributed to that because there is a huge confusion among the pupils on how to use articles correctly. Some pupils use the definite article when there is actually no reason to use it, as in the example above "on **the** February" instead of "on February". Other example, the errors in omission in definite article "on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1957" instead "on **the** 5<sup>th</sup> February 1957". In addition, they have a problem in the use of indefinite articles **an** and **a** as the pupils do not differentiate between the use and the omission of them. As shown in the following two examples: "Belgacem Haba is very famous scientist", "Belgacem Haba is **an** famous Algerian scientist", and "Belgacem Haba is **a** Algerian scientist". Consequently, we can conclude that these errors are due to a lack of mastery of the rules for the use of articles with the appropriate word.

**b. Prepositions:** A preposition is a word for connecting the main elements of a sentence including nouns, pronouns, and phrases. Prepositions have many meanings that

refer to them, such as time, place, and other types of logical connections with other elements of a sentence, and so on.

There are no clear grammatical rules for the English language regarding the use of prepositions, as reading continuously in the English language; memorizing, or searching for it in the dictionary. These seem to be the only ways to learn how to use prepositions. Even the most advanced English language learners have difficulty in learning prepositions. This is because many prepositions in English have the same function, which make them difficult for middle school pupils. It turns out that about 15.17% of the committed errors is at the prepositions level. These prepositions include **at**, **in**, **of**, and **on**. The following table illustrates some errors committed at the prepositions level.

**Table 3. 19. Sample of incorrect use of English prepositions (at, in, of, and on)**

Error classification	Error identification	Error correction
<b>Preposition</b>	1. Bachelor of science in physics▼1983	Bachelor of science in physics <b>in</b> 1983
	2. He was born <b>at</b> February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957 in El-Meghauer.	He was born <b>on</b> February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957, in El-Meghayer.
	3. He learned <b>at</b> university ▼Bab-Ezzouar.	He learned <b>on</b> university <b>of</b> Bab-Ezzouar.
	4. <b>At</b> 1983, he got his master of science in applied physics.	He got his master of science in applied physics <b>in</b> 1983.

The examples above illustrate one of the grammatical errors committed by third-year pupils in their written works. Most of the pupil's errors are due to the negative transfer L1 in their written productions, for example in the second and fourth examples the pupils



replaced the preposition "on" and "in" with "at" because of the negative transfer of L1: "He was born **at** February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1957 in El-Meghauer / **At** 1983", " He got his master of science in applied physics".

In the first and third example, pupils deleted the preposition "in" and "of": " Bachelor of Science in physics 1983/ He learned **at** university Bab-Ezzouar" because they ignored the presence of a preposition in the English language. This error cannot be related to L1 interference; rather to the pupils' ignorance of the grammar of the target language.

**c. Verb tense**

**Table 3. 20. Sample of incorrect use of verb tense**

<b>Error Classification</b>	<b>Error Identification</b>	<b>Error Correction</b>
<b>Verb Tense</b>	1. Belgacem Haba <b><u>was</u></b> a very famous scientist	Belgacem Haba <b>is</b> a very famous scientist
	2. Belgacem Haba <b><u>born</u></b>	Belgacem Haba <b>was born</b>
	3. He <b><u>was started</u></b> learning	He <b><u>started</u></b> learning.....
	4. He <b><u>is invented</u></b> more than 1000 achievements.....	He <b><u>invented</u></b> more than 1000 achievements.....
	5. My name <b>is</b> Belgacem Haba <b><u>was</u></b> a very famous...	My name <b>is</b> Belgacem Haba. I <b><u>am</u></b> a very famous....  OR Belgacem Haba <b>is</b> a very famous.
	6. He <b><u>gots</u></b> Bachelor of Science in physics in 1980	He <b><u>got</u></b> Bachelor of Science in physics in 1980

Error in verb tense is an outstanding feature of pupils' writing in this study. They made many grammar errors for various reasons. In the first and fifth examples, " Belgacem Haba **was** a very famous scientist" and " My name **is** Belgacem Haba **was** a very famous..." . The simple past is misused to replace the simple present tense verb. This error indicates that pupils face difficulties in choosing when and how to use the correct tense. This may be due to a misunderstanding of the grammatical rules for verb tenses to be correctly employed. In the second example, "Belgacem Haba **born**...", in this case the pupil has omitted the auxiliary "to be". Besides, the third and fourth examples, " He **was started** learning...." and "He **is invented** more than 1000 achievements...." In this instance, there is incorrect use of the passive form. Immediately, in the next example, there is past participle of the verb and addition of the auxiliary 'be'. The last example which is worthy to mention here in the analyses is, " He **gots** Bachelor of Science in physics in 1980". Herein, there is incorrect use of irregular verb. With the singular pronouns "he, she, and it", we add (S) to the verbs of present simple with the past participle "**got**". It means that our pupils do not distinguish between regular and irregular verbs.

## **2. Syntactical errors**

**a. Sentence structure:** It is the grammatical order of words in a sentence, and this arrangement differs from one language to another. Sentence structure problems are usually attributed to negative transfer of L1. The structure of the sentence is one of the syntactic areas where pupils of the current study make many errors.

**Table 3. 21. Sample of incorrect use of sentence structure in English**

<b>Error Classification</b>	<b>Error Identification</b>	<b>Error Correction</b>
<b>Sentence Structure</b>	1. He is Bachelor of scientist in physics 1980 <b>and</b> master of science in applied physics 1980 <b>and</b> phd in materials science <b>and</b> engineering 1980.	Belgacem Haba obtained a bachelor's degree in physics in 1980. He gained a master's degree in applied physics in 1983. He also acquired a phd in material science <b>and</b> engineering in 1988.
	2. Belgacem Haba. <b>The algerian the</b> 5 <sup>th</sup> February 1957, <b>place birth</b> El-Oued. <b>Researcher.</b>	Belgacem Haba <b>is an Algerian researcher. He was born</b> on the 5 <sup>th</sup> , February 1957.
	3. He invented Cameras and Telecommunication <b>who more than 1000</b> achievements in the field of miniaturization.	He invented <b>more than 1000</b> achievements in the field of miniaturization of Cameras and Telecommunication.
	5. Belgacem Haba, <b>he</b> is a very famous scientist.	Belgacem Haba <b>is a very famous scientist</b>

Language combinations in Arabic and English are quite different, especially with regard to the coordinating conjunction "and". In the English language, the coordinator "and" is used to join two independent sentences. In addition, English elements are

separated by a comma followed with the coordinate conjunctions. However, some pupils use "and" to link the sentences as shown in the following example, "He is Bachelor of scientist in physics 1980 **and** master of science in applied physics 1980 **and** phd in materials science **and** engineering 1980" and " He is Algerian **and** scientist". Besides, parallelism is another feature of good sentence structure and is a very important component of writing in the English language, especially when someone is “ listing, comparing or contrasting items or ideas” (Oshima and Hogue, 1999, p. 166). However, in this study, pupils demonstrated difficulty in producing parallel structures at the sentence level, which led them to develop phrases that seem strange to the English language because they have broken the rules of writing grammatically, as in this example " He invented Cameras and Telecommunication **who more than 1000** achievements in the field of miniaturization".

Errors in the parallel structure are attributed to the growth factors that result from deficiencies in traditional teaching methods and the limited experience of pupils in practice. Teachers only provide an overview of linguistic types and do not disturb themselves to enable pupils to analyze and practice these types to improve the form of their sentences.

In addition to the wrong coordination and parallelism, another deviation regarding the structure of the sentences in this study is the subject repetition as it is stated in the table "Belgacem Haba, **he** is a very famous scientist". Hence, we can consider this error a performance error that can be treated by avoiding repetition of the subject, and if it is necessary to replace it with the appropriate pronoun.

**b. Sentence fragment:** The sentences miss a subject or a verb until they are separated, and in most cases the parts are recognized as pieces of sentences which have been separated from the main items. There are some parts that are incomplete because they lack a subject or verb, or both.

**Table 3. 22. Sample of sentence fragments**

<b>Error Classification</b>	<b>Error Identification</b>	<b>Error Correction</b>
Sentence Fragment	1. Belgacem Haba ▼ a famous Algerian scientist and researcher.	Belgacem Haba <b>is</b> more than 1000 achievements.....
	2. He was born ▼ February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957.	He was born <b>on</b> February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957.
	3. ▼More than 1000 achievements.....	<b>He invented</b> more than 1000 achievements.....

Errors are associated with sentence structure, and fragments are also noted among the most common syntactical errors committed by pupils. From observing the pupils' paragraphs, it has been clear that many pupils could hardly distinguish the difference between a sentence and a fragment, and this led them to produce incomplete and incomprehensible sentences.

Nothing indicates negative transfer. Therefore, we can refer these errors in the fragmentation of the sentence to other factors that maybe a lack of practice, limited knowledge of the basic components of sentences in the English language, and the teaching methods that English language teachers employ to teach the rules of written expression. Among the errors committed by the pupils is the forgetting of subject or verb, or both, as the examples in the above table have shown.

**c. Word order:** It is the methodological arrangement of words in a sentence clause, or phrase. Different languages use different orders. In English, most sentences take SVO (subject, verb and object) order.

**Table 3. 23. Sample of incorrect use of word order in English (SVO)**

<b>Error Classification</b>	<b>Error Identification</b>	<b>Error Correction</b>
<b>Word Order</b>	1. Belgacem Haba is <b><u>scientist Algerian</u></b>	Belgacem Haba is <b><u>an Algerian scientist</u></b>
	2. He was born in El-Oued, Algeria <b>on</b> February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957,	He was born <b>on</b> February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957, in El-Oued.
	3. Belgacem Haba on the 5 <sup>th</sup> February, 1957 <b><u>was born</u></b> .	Belgacem Haba was born on the 5 <sup>th</sup> February, 1957.

Because of the L1 interference, the words are misinterpreted in the students' written product. In the first example, the adjective followed the noun that modified it resulting in errors production at word order level, as shown in the example "Belgacem Haba is **scientist Algerian**". In this regard, Barry (2014) confirmed this deficiency among Arab EFL learners when she argued that " L1 Arabic students tend to have difficulty with word order in English, displaying cross-linguistic influence when they say or write adjectives after nouns" (p.30). A similar error occurred when arranging two ideas related to the date and place of birth, which is supposed to include the date of birth first then the place, "He was born in El-Oued, Algeria **on** February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1957". In the Third example, "Belgacem Haba on the 5<sup>th</sup> February, 1957 **was born**". The pupil, herein, does not respect the English word order (SVO) because he/she has left that the verb should be placed at the end of the sentence.

### **3. Lexis**

The amount of vocabulary (words) acquired in a given language that pupils use in their learning. Hornby (1995) defines lexis as " The total number of words in a language;

vocabulary is a list of words with their meanings" (as cited in Mofareh Alqahtani, 2015, pp.24-25). From this definition, we know that in this part we discuss difficulties in choosing words or vocabulary. Below, we are going to discuss the major difficulties pupils encounter while choosing words or vocabulary to use them in their paragraphs.

**Table 3. 24. Sample of incorrect word choice**

<b>Error Classification</b>	<b>Error Identification</b>	<b>Error Correction</b>
<b>Lexis (word choice)</b>	1. He <b>was <u>birth</u></b> in February, 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957.	He <b>was <u>born</u></b> in February, 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957.
	2. He <b><u>jobs</u></b> scientist and researcher.	He <b><u>is a</u></b> scientist and researcher.
	3. He <b><u>discovered</u></b> more than 1000 achievements.....	He <b><u>invented</u></b> more than 1000 achievements.....
	4. He <b><u>invention</u></b> of .....	He <b><u>invented</u></b> .....
	5. He Algerian <b><u>nationality</u></b> and Algerian scientist.	He is an Algerian scientist.

Learning the target language vocabulary is necessary and important to develop pupils' ability to write. However, many factors prevented this learning, especially the pupils' reliance on using words without taking into considerations the true meaning of that word, pupils' dependence on the transfer from Arabic to facilitate second language learning, and they do not read enough to store many of the vocabularies words to use them in developing paragraph ideas. As shown in the first and fourth examples, "He **was birth** in February, 5<sup>th</sup>, 1957 / He **invention** of ...", the pupil uses the noun instead of the verb. This

is due to his inability to put the difference between the verb and the noun. Sometimes the pupil lacks the appropriate word, which forces him to use a close word in the meaning, as shown in the third example "He **discovered** more than 1000 achievements...". The use of the synonym may be a solution for him/her. Another type of lexical error occurs when pupils use literal translations to convey words and English Arabic expressions, as in the last example "He Algerian **nationality** and Algerian scientist". Pupils used literal translation from L1 to transmit their ideas in English.

#### 4. Mechanics

**a. Capitalization:** Writing the beginning of the word (i.e., the first letter) in uppercase. There are simple and clear guidelines for using uppercase letters in the English language, but EFL pupils always have problems in using capital letters because there are no capital letters in their mother language that helps them to understand and apply them in the English language correctly.

**Table 3. 25. Sample of incorrect use of capitalization**

Error Classification	Error Identification	Error Correction
<b>Capitalization</b>	1. <b>He</b> got Bachelor of science in physics in 1980.	<b>He</b> got Bachelor of science in physics in 1980.
	2...from <b>stanford</b> university, <b>california</b> .	.....from <b>Stanford</b> university, <b>California</b> .
	3. My name is <b>belgacem</b> HABA.	My name is <b>Belgacem</b> HABA.
	5. <b>PHD</b> in materials science and engineering.....	<b>Phd</b> in materials science and engineering.....
	6. ....on <b>february</b> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957.	....on <b>February</b> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957.



Many of the pupils in this study do not use capital letters correctly and most errors occurred in the first letters of words. The first error has to do with omission of the capitalization. The pupil begins his sentence without writing the first letter of the first word (**he = He**), although there is a basic rule in the English language written that says each sentence must begin with a capital letter. For instance, in the second and fifth examples "from stanford university, california and ....on february, 5<sup>th</sup>, 1957", the pupil does not respect the rule that the proper nouns of places and persons should be capitalized. In the fourth example, the pupil used the acronym (**PHD= phd**) in capitalized form because he believes that all acronyms take capital letters, and this error can be attributed to ignorance of the target language rules.

**b. Punctuation:** It is used to make writing in English clear, organized, and meaningful. Punctuation is easy to understand but difficult to use it correctly in writing, especially for beginners who are learning English as a foreign language. In fact, the correct use of punctuation in writing is an essential skill for these pupils, but it takes a very long time of study and practice.

**Table 3. 26. Sample of incorrect use of punctuation marks**

<b>Error Classification</b>	<b>Error Identification</b>	<b>Error Correction</b>
<b>Punctuation</b>	1. Belgacem Haba is a very famous scientist and researcher, he is from Algeria, he was born.....	Belgacem Haba is a very famous scientist and researcher. He is from Algeria. He was born.....
	2. He was born in El-Oued on February 5 <sup>th</sup> 1957	He was born in El-Oued on February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957.
	3. Belgacem Haba. More than 1000 achievements in.....	Belgacem Haba invented more than 1000 achievements in.....
	4. Belgacem Haba was born in Algeria. February 5 <sup>th</sup> . 1957 on EL-Meghayer	Belgacem Haba was born in Algeria on February 5 <sup>th</sup> , 1957, on EL-Meghayer.

By examining the written texts of our sample, it becomes clear that pupils have difficulty concerning how to use punctuation, particularly that of a comma and a period. So pupils should be more aware of the importance of punctuation and how to use them correctly in writing. Since there is over use of commas and periods in the mother tongue (Arabic) than in the English language, pupils tend to use an unlimited amount commas and periods in their paragraph. The pupils added commas where they are unnecessary, as the first examples shows "Belgacem Haba is a very famous scientist and researcher, he is from Algeria, he was born...". In addition to adding the commas, pupils deleted all the necessary punctuation marks in the sentence, and the second example illustrates this " He was born in El-Oued on February 5<sup>th</sup> 1957". The last example illustrates the misuse of the period in almost the entire pupil's paragraphs. Some pupils wrote whole paragraphs without indicating the end of these parts of writing.

c. **Spelling:** It is the ability to shape words with correct arrangement of letters and accepted for their formation. In English, spelled words are different from pronounced ones. Below are some data related to the most typical spelling errors committed by third-year pupils at Ibn Khaldoune Middle School.

**Table 3. 27. Sample of spelling errors**

<b>Error Classification</b>	<b>Error Identification</b>	<b>Error Correction</b>
<b>Spelling</b>	1. Belgacem Haba <b><u>discofor</u></b> more than 1000 achievements in the field of .....	Belgacem Haba <b><u>discover</u></b> more than 1000 achievements in the field of.....
	2. He <b><u>tike</u></b> master of science in applied physics in 1988.	He <b><u>take</u></b> master of science in applied physics in 1988.
	3. Belgacem Haba is a <b><u>saventist</u></b> .	Belgacem Haba is a <b><u>scientist</u></b> .
	4. Belgacem Haba is a very <b><u>fames</u></b> .	Belgacem Haba is a very <b><u>famous</u></b> .

In addition, most common spelling errors that EFL pupils make in the current study can be explained in relation to the following criteria:

- Confused word spellings with other words because they have the same pronunciation, but have different spelling, or they have almost the same pronunciation: " were/where"
- Sometimes pupils write words as they pronounce them: discofor – sayntiste- stadies – tike –mather – fames- mester.
- Add “e” to the words “frome” and “scientiste”, while some pupil omitted it when it is necessary: morthan, Hi (He).
- Sometimes the consonant "C" is omitted: " sientist"

The spelling errors can be ascribed to interference of French words on English words because French is the second language before English in the educational system of Algeria. Thus, pupils get confused to spell words correctly in English. In the second category of errors, we have noticed that the pupil's pronunciation has led to the production of errors in spelling. The third and the fourth categories of errors which have to do with omitting or adding the letter (e) to some words can be attributed to inadequate knowledge of the English spelling rules and French interference at this level. Furthermore, they do not add the letter 'c' to the word "scientist".

So, the current analysis aimed at investigating the types and frequency of writing errors committed by pupils of Ibn Khaldoune Middle School in Tolga, Biskra, when writing English paragraphs. The results of current analysis reveal that pupils commit several written errors mainly grammatical errors. Regarding their writing performance, they demonstrate insufficient knowledge of vocabulary, and many sentences are incomprehensible. Pupils face difficulties in using the grammar of the English language structure. Therefore, we can conclude that pupils have problems obtaining and applying the grammar of the English language to get a correct written text.

## **Conclusion**

In the present chapter, we have describe the three data gathering tools used for the study of third year middle school pupils at Ibn Khaldoune middle school in Tolga and discussed the findings. A questionnaire has been addressed to two third year EFL middle school teachers, an interview has been conducted with nine (09) EFL middle school pupils in the third year, and the last one is the analysis of pupils' written paragraphs.

The findings of the current study are summarized within the respective analysis: the analysis of questionnaire, analysis of the interview, and the corpus analysis:

The analysis of the teachers' questionnaire reveals that the teachers are not satisfied from their pupils' level in writing. They are confirming that their pupils face tremendous difficulties when they produce a piece of writing. These difficulties include grammar, punctuation, capitalization and spelling, which makes them commit many written errors and spelling errors that hinder correct and accurate text. They attribute these difficulties to many reasons, including mother language interference in the English language writing system, lack of reading, overcrowded classrooms, lack of practice in writing, corrective feedback, lack of time allotment, and lack of training courses.

The analysis of the pupils' interview exposes that third year middle school pupils face difficulties in writing skill. They do not have the ability to write correct sentence and conjugating verbs. The lack of mastery of the language principles makes the interviewed pupils write in a wrong way such as using prepositions and articles, punctuation marks, using capital letters, and spelling. These difficulties have multiple causes, including lack of concentration and preparation, lack of revision, and the allotted time for writing. In addition, the teacher may be a source of discouragement while correcting written paragraph.

Concerning the analysis of written text, the findings show the poor writing productions of most of the third year pupils are a good example about the difficulty of writing skill. They commit errors in different levels, such as grammatical and syntactical errors, mechanical errors, and lexical errors; the most important of which are grammatical errors. Thus, we can conclude that pupils have obstacles in the acquisition and application of English grammar rules to obtain a correct written text.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **Recommendations**

One of the basics of study results, some suggestions are offered. The results of the current investigation have led to some suggestions for teachers and middle school pupils teaching and studying at Ibn Khaldoune Middle School Tolga, Biskra.

On the one hand,

1. Teachers should educate their pupils about the importance of writing skills and the aims and objectives of studying them during the course.
2. Teachers should be a source of motivation: teachers should be aware of their role to motivate pupils to write by providing them with interesting topics. Moreover, they need to create appropriate physical atmospheres which help pupils to learn.
3. Teachers should be aware of the different factors that influence their pupils' writing, such as inadequate teaching approach of writing skill, lack of practice inside the classroom, time allotment for practicing writing, lack of reading, and mother language interference.
4. Teachers should use effective technologies to teach lessons, especially grammatical lessons for example the use of flash cards games.
5. Teachers should use effective feedback. After correcting pupils' exam papers, we noticed a lack of teachers' "feedback" (see Appendix 03, page 134). Hence, teachers at all levels must be aware of the benefits of feedback and its use. It is true that pupils are interested in marks and nothing else, but feedback comments encourage pupils to improve their writing level. Comments of feedback are intended to highlight weaknesses and / or strengths.
6. Teachers should use selective correction that makes their pupils interested in their errors. Selective correction requires teachers to focus on the essential aspects of writing. If they use "selective correction," pupils should know this, meaning

teachers should tell them what aspects to focus on in their correction such as grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, tenses, etc. They should discuss with their pupils to make them aware of this. They should also use correction symbols, especially when dealing with paragraph writing. It encourages pupils to reflect on the error, to be able to correct it on their own (self-correcting). (Harmer, 2007a, pp. 110-111) (See Appendix 04, page 142) suggested the best frequently used symbols.

7. Teachers should encourage pupils to read to gain vocabulary and learn grammar. Reading is the perfect method for improving writing in or out of the classroom as it is known that, "good readers are always good writers".

On the second hand, third year middle school pupils need to

1. Read more to enrich their vocabulary and learn grammar.
2. Try to engage in homework to improve their levels of linguistic aspects. Pupils have to encourage themselves to practice writing activities at home, and in their free time.
3. Practice writing frequently to strengthen their style and language for writing. For example, try free writing, building random sentence, read other writing, and make a guide.

Lastly, the syllabus designers should

1. Give importance to writing skill within the syllabus. Since the allotted time is not sufficient to address the difficulties pupils face, they should consider this factor and allow more time for EFL teachers as they are obligated to finish the entire syllabus in a limited time.
2. Give importance to writing tasks within the syllabus to teach paragraph structure (i.e., topic sentence, supporting sentences, supporting details, and conclusion)



stages of the writing processes (i.e., pre-write, drafting, revising, proofreading, and publishing), paragraph unity, coherence, cohesion, punctuation marks, spelling words correctly, etc. Beside, the pupils have to be given enough opportunities to practice writing inside and outside the school as homework followed with constructive feedback.

2. Provide training courses to the middle school teachers of English to discuss the writing difficulties and try to find solutions to improve this skill among their pupils.
3. Design courses for writing about two hours per-week to help pupils write correctly and communicate their ideas effectively.

**GENERAL  
CONCLUSION**

## **General conclusion**

The current study aimed to investigate the major difficulties and analyze common errors writing encountered by EFL pupils studying at Ibn Khaldoune middle school in Tolga-Biskra. Thus, this study attempted to answer all the following research questions: (a) What is the nature of writing difficulties third year EFL middle school pupils usually face?(b) What are the major causes of third year EFL pupils writing difficulties? (c) What is the nature of error in third year EFL middle school pupils' writings? (d) What are the causes of error production in third year EFL middle school pupils' writings?. To achieve the overall aims and find answers to the posed research questions, three research tools are selected and used among our sample of middle school teachers and their pupils. First, the questionnaire for teachers intends to explore the difficulties teachers and their pupils face when teaching the writing skill. Second, interview conducted with nine (9) of third year middle school pupils intends to examine closely the writing challenges those pupils face during examination. Third, corpus analysis research tool intends to analyze the nature of errors the targeted sample produce while composing their paragraphs about ninety four (94) paragraphs.

In line with these questions, we attempted also to confirm the research hypotheses which states that: (a) If third year EFL middle school pupils have difficulties with writing, such as inability to write good topic sentence, generate ideas, to keep unity and coherence of the paragraph, and so on, that would distract them to write an accurate paragraph; (b) If third year EFL middle school pupils make errors in their paragraphs, such as incorrect application of grammatical rules, incorrect use of punctuation marks and capitalizations, spelling mistakes, and so on, that would hinder them to write a good paragraph.

Before presenting our final answers to the posed research questions, it is worthy to state here that our study consists three chapters. First, writing is a productive skill. it is

important for teaching learning process. It refers to the correct use of language. This includes grammar, punctuation, capitalization, vocabulary that would help pupils to write correct and accurate paragraph. Learn to write correctly and consistently needs to use some approaches (product, process,...ect) used to edit a coherent paragraph that the readers can understand what they write since they write to others because any weakness in writing makes difficulties for the pupils.

Second, writing in a foreign language is a difficult task for EFL pupils. This difficulty makes their production weak. These difficulties are due to several causes, including the written instructions and the nature of the writing process...ect which leads pupils to commit errors in their writing texts, such as grammar errors, spelling errors, mechanical errors and lexical errors. These errors are related to the use of L1 in L2 writing. Pupils have to improve their writing abilities by applying some effective strategies.

To reach the objectives of our study, a triangulated research tools including, such as questionnaire, interview, and corpus analysis to gather the data about the writing difficulties and causes under investigation that have a great impact in the productivity of the pupils writing skill while the English language needs to master its rules.

The majority of third year EFL pupils face difficulties in writing. These difficulties are related to organizing and connecting ideas, inappropriate and incorrect word selection and use, incorrect application of grammar rules, and misspelled words. These difficulties caused by: (a) ineffective teaching approach of writing skill, (b) lack of practice inside the classroom, (c) insufficient time for practicing writing, lack of reading, (d) negativity towards composing, (e) mother language interference, and finally (f) teachers' negative and de-motivating feedback.

In addition, learning to write correctly and consistently is something that EFL pupils are still unable to manage. They fail to gain full mastery of the activities of writing English

as a foreign language. They commit tremendous errors in their written texts on all levels. Their writing difficulties show their level because they lack language proficiency; their knowledge of writing is limited. The committed errors include grammatical (articles, preposition, verb tense, ...ect) and syntactical errors (sentence structure, fragments, word order), mechanical errors (punctuation and capitalization), and lexical errors (word choice); the most important of which are grammatical errors. These errors are due to: lack of concentration and preparation, lack of revision, and the allotted time for writing. In addition, the teacher may be a source of demotivation while correcting written paragraph. To illustrate this point, when asked pupils which teachers they would prefer to study with, pupils immediately refer to teachers "X" or "Y" but not "Z"; The reason is that they learn quickly and understandably with some and get bored with others, and sometimes the teacher oppresses the pupil in the correction. This is true and no teacher knows the same way under the same situations. However, teachers can be frustrated when they do not reinforce learning and excitation learners write confidently and prefer contempt for making errors, repeating the same activities over and over, and do not encourage them to write in or outside the classroom. In other words, motivated teachers can produce motivated learners.

Finally, we believe that this work is equally beneficial to all EFL middle school teachers especially to improve their teaching methods and learn the skill of writing, for example, organizing reading courses for pupils. We also hope it will open new avenues for investigating other aspects of writing problems.

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# **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1

### Questionnaire for teachers

Dear teachers,

This academic research work deals with major difficulties that prevent third year middle school pupils' achievement in writing. So, the purpose is to discover and analyze them. Then, we will suggest strategies that may help middle school pupils overcome these difficulties and ameliorate their writing production. Make sure that your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

#### **Biographical information**

Please tick ( ) in the appropriate box.

6. Can you determine your educational level?

- a. License
- b. Master
- c. Magister

7. How long have you been teaching English?

- a. 1-5 years
- b. 5-10 years
- c. More than 10 years

#### **Section one: writing skill**

Please, answer the following questions

8. What is the most important skill learners need to master?

→ .....

Please, why?.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

9. Do you think that the third year middle school program of English gives special priority to the writing skill?

.....  
.....  
Please, state why?.....

→ .....

.....

.....

.....

**10.** How many teaching hours' per-day and week are devoted to writing?

.....

.....

**11.** Do you think that the devoted time to writing is sufficient enough to enable pupils write correctly and accurately?

→ .....

.....

.....

.....

**12.** How do you teach writing?

.....

.....

.....

**13.** What do you think are the main aspects of good writing you teach to your pupils?

→ .....

.....

.....

.....

**14.** Do you give your pupils opportunities to practice writing inside or outside the classroom?

.....

.....

.....

.....

→ Please, explain why?

.....





→ .....

.....

.....

.....

5. Do they use the writing stages (pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing) to write?

.....

.....

→ Please, explain?.....

.....

.....

**Section three: Causes of middle school pupils writing difficulties**

Please tick ( ) the appropriate box.

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. The inadequate teaching approach of writing skill in the middle school				
2. Teachers' corrective feedback plays a crucial role in pupils writing				
3. The huge- numbered class affects the pupils' written performance				
Lack of interest and willingness to write in English.				
The mother language (Arabic) has an impact on writing in English				
Pupils do not read enough				
The lack of writing practices in the teaching curriculum				
Teacher is a factor of demotivation				

**→ Please, if there are other causes that prevent your pupils from writing accurately?**

.....  
.....  
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.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Thank you for cooperation**

**Master two student: Ms.BAAISSA Hasna**

**Mohamed Kheidher University of Biskra**

**Faculty of Letters and Languages**

**Department of Foreign Languages**

**Division of English**

## **Appendix 2**

### **Pupils' interview**

Dear pupils,

This interview suggested that we gather more information to accomplish the Master's thesis about "*Investigating major difficulties and analyzing common errors encountered by EFL learners in writing*". Therefore, we would be grateful if you would answer the following questions. Your answer will help us greatly to the success of this research study.

**School:** Ibn khaldoune middle school –Tolga

**Level of the pupils:** Third year

**Number of interviewed:** 09 pupils

**Time of interview:** after English examination

### **Questions**

1. Do you write a paragraph
2. Why do not you write anything in the paragraph?
3. Do you face some difficulties while composing a paragraph? What are they
4. Do you make an outline or mind map before you start writing to generate ideas?
5. Do you face a problem to organize your ideas while writing a paragraph?
6. What types of errors do you make it in writing paragraph?
7. Can you write a correct sentence?
8. Do you know how to conjugate the verbs in a specific tense?
9. Are grammar, punctuation, spelling and capitalization the problems in your writing?
10. What do you think are the causes of your paragraph writing difficulties?

**Thank you for your time and collaboration.**

**Master two student:** Ms.BAAISSA Hasna

**Mohamed Kheidher University of Biskra**

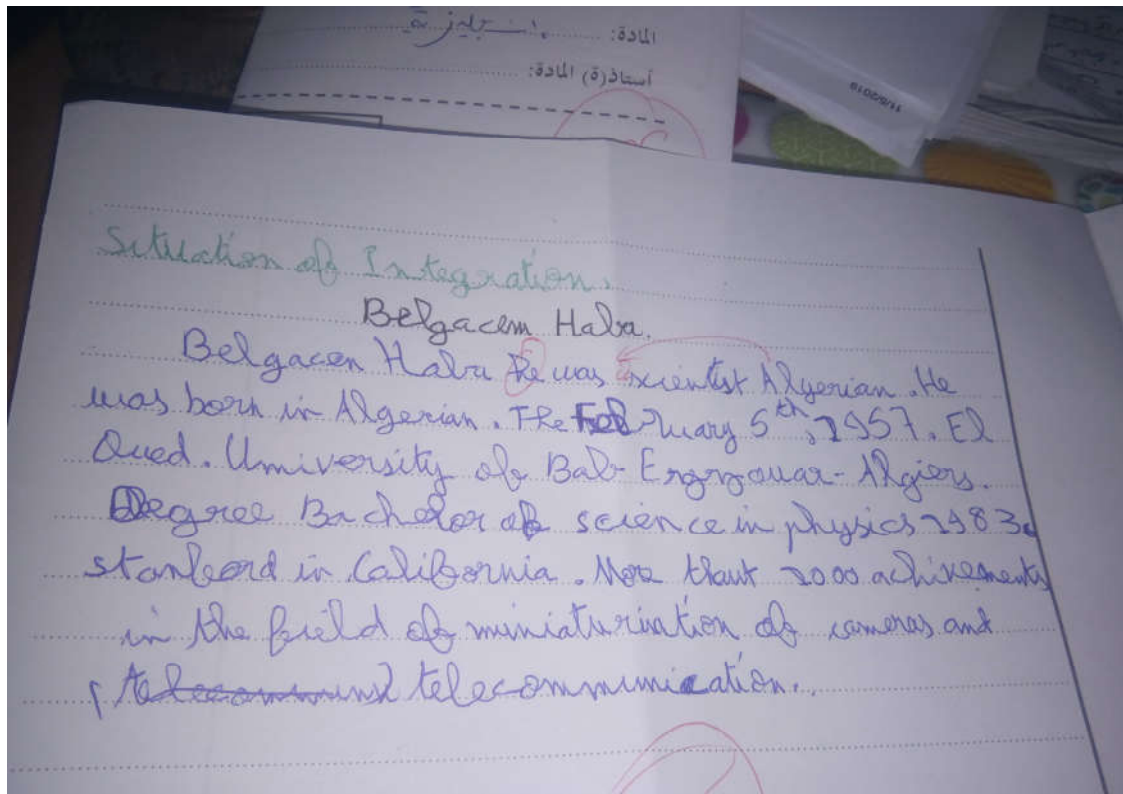
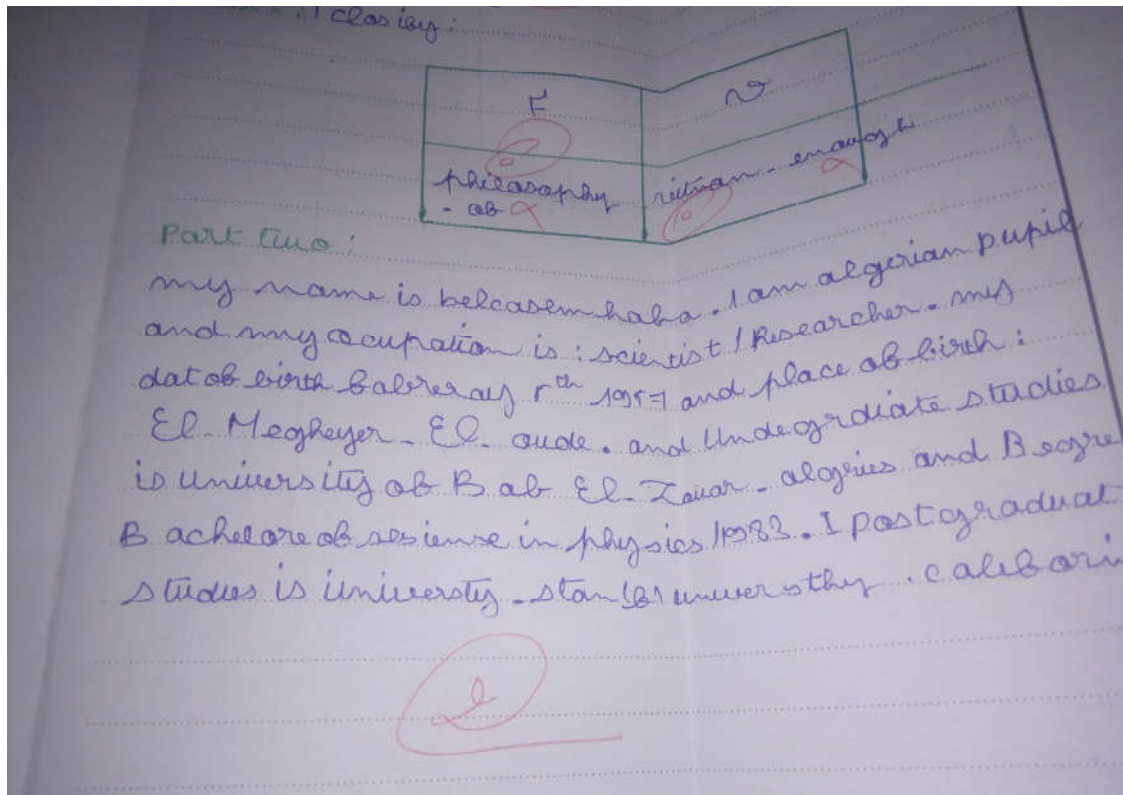
**Faculty of Letters and Languages**

**Department of Foreign Languages**

**Division of English**

### Appendix 3

#### Samples of pupils 'exam papers



(F)	(VI)
Philosophy - of (10)	Vitamin - enough (10)

Situation of Integration

Belgacem HABA is former Algerian Scientist  
 Researcher on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 1957 in El Meghayer  
 El Oued in University of Badj Ezzouar. A degree  
 Bachelor of Science in physics 1980 post graduate  
 Studies Stanford University California in Master of  
 Science in applied physics 1983  
 Ph.D. in Material Science and engineering 1988. He  
 Belgacem Haba More than 1000 achievements in  
 the field of miniaturisation of cameras and  
 telecommunication.

Situation of Integration =

Belgacem Haba is former Algerian scientist. He  
 is scientist and (research) researcher. He was born  
 5<sup>th</sup> february 1957 in Meghayer. He studied at  
 Badjzouar university in Algiers and He went  
 Bachelor of science in physics 1980. He studied  
 Stanford University in California. He went  
 Master of science in applied physics 1983 and  
 on 1988 and he went Ph.D in Material science and  
 engineering on 1988. Belgacem Haba (occupation)  
 more than 1000 achievements in the field of  
 miniaturisation of cameras and telecommunication

(3)

philosophy - enough of victory

Situation of Integration:

Belgacem Haba is very famous scientist and researcher, he is from in Algerian, he was born february 5<sup>th</sup> 1957 in El-Meghayer El Qued, where was Undergraduate studies University of Bab Ezzouar in Algerian, Belgacem Haba Degree in bachelor of science in physics 1980, he Postgraduate studies University: stanford University California he is Degree: Master of science in applied physics 1983 and PhD in Material science and engineering 1988, More than 1000 achievements in the field of miniaturisation of cameras and telecommunication.

philosophy enough

Situation of Integration:

Belgacem HABA is in Algerian in scientist is Researcher in U.S.A on the february 5<sup>th</sup> 1957 but he continued to El-Meghayer in El Qued university of Bab Ezzouar - Algiers Degree Bachelor of science in physics 1980 in Master of science in applied physics 1983 is PhD in Material science and engineering 1988.

Part two =  
 Situation of integration =  
 Belgacem Haba =  
 Belgacem Haba is born in El-meghayer, El-oued on the 5<sup>th</sup> February, 1957. he is scientist and researcher. he is Bachelor of scientist in physics at 1980. he study of Bab Ezzouar - Algiers who studied Stanford university in California and he is Master of science in applied physics at 1988. He miniaturisation of cameras and telecommunication.

3.1

enough of

Part two =  
 Situation of Integration =  
 Belgacem Haba a famous Algerian scientist who was born in February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1957 in El-Meghayer / El-Oued. He was a reuse of Bab Ezzouar - Algiers and university. He got his Bachelor of science in physics ~~into~~ master degree in 1980. Belgacem Haba also got his PhD in Material science and engineering in 1988. He invented cameras and telecommunication who more than 1000 achievements in the field of miniaturisation.

4

## Situation of Integration =

Belgacem Habba he was born in el Mechayer, USA February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1957, he is a scientist and researcher.

Belgacem, is university of Bab el Jazair in Algeria. he was bachelor of science in physics 1980, he Stanford University California and Master of science in applied physics 1983, he PhD in Material science and engineering 1988

Belgacem Habba over than 1000 achievements in the field miniaturization of cameras and telecommunication.

### Task 3:

IV1	IV2
philosophy enough	ob. vitamin

### Situation of Integration:

Belgacem HABA in born of Algerian



## Appendix 4

### Correction symbols (Harmer, 2007a, p.111)

Symbol	Meaning	Example error
S	A spelling error	The answer is <u>obvius</u> .
WO	A mistake in word order	I like very much it.
G	A grammar mistake	I am going to buy some <u>furnitures</u> .
T	Wrong verb tense	I <u>have seen</u> him yesterday.
C	Concord mistake (e.g. Subject and verb agreement)	People <u>is</u> angry
<	Something has been left out.	He told < that he was sorry.
WW	Wrong word	I am interested <u>on</u> jazz music
{ }	Something is not necessary.	He was not {too}strong enough
?M	The meaning is unclear.	That is a <u>very excited photograph</u> .
P	A punctuation mistake	Do you like London.
F/I	Too formal or informal	<u>Hi</u> Mr Franklin, Thank you for your letter...

## Appendix 5

### University permit to hold an internship

الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية  
وزارة التعليم العالي و البحث العلمي



كلية الآداب و اللغات  
قسم الآداب و اللغات الأجنبية  
رقم : 28 / ش. / 2020  
شعبة الانجليزية

إلى السيد: مدير متوسطة العلامة ابن خلدون فرفار - طولقة.

#### الموضوع : طلب تصريح لإجراء تربص

يشرفني أن ألتمس من سيادتكم تمكين الطالب (ة): بعيسى حسنة صاحبة رقم التسجيل : 447720 من إجراء تربص مع التلاميذ والأساتذة في مؤسستكم .  
أحيطكم علما سيدي أن هذه الطالبة تدرس لغة إنجليزية في السنة الثانية ماستر بجامعة محمد خيذر بيسكرة وهي بحاجة إلى هذا التربص من أجل بحثها.  
وفي إنتظار قبول هذا الطلب ، تقبلو منا سيدي فائق الإحترام وخالص الشكر و الإمتنان.

بسكرة في : 2020/02/03

نائب العميد المكلف بما بعد التدرج و البحث العلمي

والعلاقات الخارجية

نائب العميد المكلف بما بعد التدرج  
والبحث العلمي والعلاقات  
الخارجية  
د/عمار ربيع

مسؤول الشعبة

مسؤول شعبة الانجليزية  
ابو حيتيم الطيب

Appendix 6

Request approval to set internship for the proposed middle school

الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية

إلى السيد  
مدير متوسطة  
إبنة ملدون - قفران  
طولقة

الأستاذة: بريسما حسنت  
236 صوك الجاهدين 05  
طولقة  
الهاتف: 80 99 19 0669

تحية المواقفة على اجراء تخرجي

حيث اننا نتمنى ان تقدم الحسياء وكلها المصترمة بطلبي  
هذا والمتقبل في اجراء تخرجي بالموسسة  
مع استاذة اللغة الإنجليزية - مستو عا اساتذة متوسط  
منه في قفران الى غاية 24 فيرجا 2020.  
أرجو ان يمان طابقي هذا بالمواقفة وكله منكم  
فائق التقدير والإحترام.

باسم الله  
[Signature]

بالمواقفة  
[Stamp: 19 09 2020] [Signature]  
فايزة الحيد

## ملخص

يعتبر تدريس الكتابة لتلاميذ الصف الثالث متوسط في مدرسة ابن خلدون الإعدادية مهمة صعبة بالنسبة لمعظم المعلمين. يواجه غالبية التلاميذ صعوبات في تحقيق مستوى مرضٍ في الكتابة. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقق من الصعوبات الرئيسية التي يواجهها متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الكتابة ، مع الأخذ في الاعتبار حالة تلاميذ الصف الثالث المتوسط في مدرسة ابن خلدون الإعدادية في طولقة. تستهدف الدراسة الفصول الثلاثة (عدد = 3) للسنة الثالثة متوسط للعام الدراسي 2020/2019. تتعلق العينة بمعلمين اثنين، لديهما سنوات خبرة من 4 إلى أكثر من 10 سنوات في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، وخمسة وتسعين (ن = 95) تلميذاً (ذكور = 46، إناث = 49). استخدمت الباحثة استبيان لأساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية للسنة الثالثة متوسط، ومقابلة مع تسعة (ن = 9) تلاميذ في الصف الثالث المتوسط ، بالإضافة إلى تحليل نصوصهم المكتوبة. والهدف من استخدام استبيان المعلمين ومقابلة التلاميذ هو التأكد من صحة الصعوبات والتشخيص الدقيق للأسباب الكامنة وراء ضعف التلاميذ في إنتاج نص مقبول، والهدف من استخدام تحليل النص المكتوب هو التعرف على طبيعة و تصنيفها حسب نوعها. يكشف تحليل استبيان المعلمين أن غالبية تلاميذهم يواجهون صعوبات عند الكتابة وتعود الأسباب إلى: النهج التعليمي الغير المناسب، وقلة ممارسة الكتابة داخل القسم، وعدم كفاية الوقت ، قلة القراءة ، تأثير اللغة الأم في اللغة الإنجليزية ، عدم الرغبة لكتابة، و ملاحظات الأساتذة المحبطة لمعنويات المتعلمين. يكشف تحليل نصهم المكتوب أن معظم التلاميذ يرتكبون أخطاء يكشف تحليل نصوصهم المكتوبة أن معظم أخطاء التلاميذ لها علاقة بحروف الجر في اللغة الإنجليزية، واستخدام حروف التعريف الإنجليزية، وتركيب الجمل، وأجزاء الجملة ، وصيغة الفعل ، وعلامات الترقيم، واستخدام الأحرف الكبيرة، واختيار الكلمات، وترتيب الكلمات، والتهجئة.